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THE

B R A V O:

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE SPY," "THE RED ROVER,"
"THE WATER-WITCH," &c.

Giustizia in palazzo, e pane in piazza.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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STEREOTYPED BY J. HOWE.

THE BRAVO.

CHAPTER I.

“ Yet a few days and dream-perturbed nights,
And I shall slumber well—but where?—no matter.
Adieu, my Angiolina.”

Marino Faliero.

WHEN the Carmelite re-entered the apartment of Donna Violetta, his face was covered with the hue of death, and his limbs with difficulty supported him to a chair. He scarcely observed that Don Camillo Monforte was still present, nor did he note the brightness and joy which glowed in the eyes of the ardent Violetta. Indeed his appearance was at first unseen by the happy lovers, for the Lord of St. Agata had succeeded in wresting the secret from the breast of his mistress, if that may be called a secret which Italian character had scarcely struggled to retain, and he had crossed the room before even the more tranquil look of the Donna Florinda rested on his person.

“ Thou art ill!” exclaimed the governess. “ Father Anselmo hath not been absent without grave cause!”

The monk threw back his cowl for air, and the act discovered the deadly paleness of his features. But his eye, charged with a meaning of horror, rolled over the faces of those who drew around him, as if he struggled with memory to recall their persons.

“ Ferdinando! Father Anselmo!” cried the Donna Florinda, correcting the unbidden familiarity, though she could not command the anxiety of her rebel features; “ Speak to us—thou art suffering!”

“ Ill at heart, Florinda.”

“ Deceive us not—haply thou hast more evil tidings—Venice—”

“ Is a fearful state !”

“ Why hast thou quitted us ?—why, in a moment of so much importance to our pupil—a moment that may prove of the last influence on her happiness—hast thou been absent for a long hour ?”

Violetta turned a surprised and unconscious glance towards the clock, but she spoke not.

“ The servants of the state had need of me ;” returned the monk, easing the pain of his spirit by a groan.

“ I understand thee, father ;—thou hast shrived a penitent ?”

“ Daughter, I have : and fewer depart more at peace with God and their fellows !”

Donna Florinda murmured a short prayer for the soul of the dead, piously crossing herself as she concluded. Her example was imitated by her pupil, and even the lips of Don Camillo moved, while his head was bowed by the side of his fair companion, in seeming reverence.

“ ‘Twas a just end, father ?” demanded Donna Florinda.

“ It was an unmerited one !” cried the monk, with fervor, “ or there is no faith in man. I have witnessed the death of one who was better fitted to live, as happily he was better fitted to die, than those who pronounced his doom. What a fearful state is Venice !”

“ And such are they who are masters of thy person, Violetta,” said Don Camillo : “ to these midnight murderers will thy happiness be consigned ! Tell us, father, does thy sad tragedy touch in any manner on the interests of this fair being ? for we are encircled here by mysteries that are as incomprehensible, while they are nearly as fearful, as fate itself.”

The monk looked from one to the other, and a more human expression began to appear in his countenance.

"Thou art right," he said; "such are the men who mean to dispose of the person of our pupil. Holy St. Mark, pardon the prostitution of his revered name, and shield her with the virtue of his prayers!"

"Father, are we worthy to know more of that thou hast witnessed?"

"The secrets of the confessional are sacred, my son; but this hath been a disclosure to cover the living, and not the dead, with shame."

"I see the hand of those up above in this!" for so most spoke of the Council of Three. "They have tampered with my right, for years, to suit their selfish purposes, and, to my shame must I own it, they have driven me to a submission, in order to obtain justice, that as ill accords with my feelings as with my character."

"Nay, Camillo, thou art incapable of this injustice to thyself!"

"'Tis a fearful government, dearest, and its fruits are equally pernicious to the ruler and the subject. It hath, of all other dangers the greatest, the curse of secrecy on its intentions, its acts, and its responsibilities!"

"Thou sayest true, my son; there is no security against oppression and wrong in a state, but the fear of God, or the fear of man. Of the first, Venice hath none, for too many souls share the odium of her sins; and as for the last, her deeds are hid from their knowledge."

"We speak boldly, for those who live beneath her laws," observed Donna Florinda, glancing a look timidly around her. "As we can neither change nor amend the practices of the state, better that we should be silent."

"If we cannot alter the power of the council, we may elude it," hastily answered Don Camillo, though he too dropped his voice, and assured himself of their security, by closing the casement, and casting his eyes towards the different doors of the room. "Are you assured of the fidelity of the menials, Donna Florinda?"

"Far from it, Signore; we have those who are of ancient service and of tried character; but we have those who are named by the senator, Gradenigo, and who are doubtless no other than the agents of the state."

"In this manner do they pry into the privacy of all! I am compelled to entertain, in my palace, varlets that I know to be their hirelings; and yet do I find it better to seem unconscious of their views, lest they environ me in a manner that I cannot even suspect. Think you, father, that my presence here hath escaped the spies?"

"It would be to hazard much were we to rely on such security. None saw us enter, as I think, for we used the secret gate and the more private entrance; but who is certain of being unobserved when every fifth eye is that of a mercenary?"

The terrified Violetta laid her hand on the arm of her lover.

"Even now, Camillo," she said, "thou mayest be observed; and secretly devoted to punishment!"

"If seen, doubt it not: St. Mark will never pardon so bold an interference with his pleasure. And yet, sweetest Violetta, to gain thy favor, this risk is nothing; nor will a far greater hazard turn me from my purpose."

"These inexperienced and confiding spirits have taken advantage of my absence to communicate more freely than was discreet;" said the Carmelite, in the manner of one who foresaw the answer.

"Father, nature is too strong for the weak preventives of prudence."

The brow of the monk became clouded. His companions watched the workings of his mind, as they appeared in a countenance that in common was so benevolent, though always sad. For a few moments none broke the silence.

The Carmelite at length demanded, raising his troubled look to the countenance of Don Camillo—

"Hast thou duly reflected on the consequences of this rashness, son? What dost thou purpose, in thus braving the anger of the republic, and in setting at defiance her arts, her secret means of intelligence, and her terrors?"

"Father, I have reflected as all of my years reflect, when in heart and soul they love. I have brought myself to feel that any misery would be happiness compared to the loss of Violetta, and that no risk can exceed the reward of gaining her favor. Thus much for the first of thy questions—for the last I can only say that I am too much accustomed to the wiles of the senate to be a novice in the means of counteracting them."

"There is but one language for youth, when seduced by that pleasing delusion which paints the future with hues of gold. Age and experience may condemn it, but the weakness will continue to prevail in all, until life shall appear in its true colors. Duke of Sant' Agata, though a noble of high lineage and illustrious name, and though lord of many vassals, thou art not a power—thou canst not declare thy palace in Venice a fortress, nor send a herald to the doge with defiance."

"True, reverend monk; I cannot do this; nor would it be well for him who could, to trust his fortune on so reckless a risk. But the states of St. Mark do not cover the earth—we can fly."

“ The senate hath a long arm ; and it hath a thousand secret hands.”

“ None know it better than I ; still it does no violence without motive ; the faith of their ward irretrievably mine, the evil, as respects them, becomes irreparable.”

“ Think’st thou so ! Means would quickly be found to separate you. Believe not that Venice would be thwarted of its design so easily ; the wealth of a house like this would purchase many an unworthy suitor, and thy right would be disregarded, or haply denied.”

“ But, father, the ceremony of the church may not be despised !” exclaimed Violetta ; “ it comes from heaven and is sacred.”

“ Daughter, I say it with sorrow, but the great and the powerful find means even to set aside that venerable and holy sacrament. Thine own gold would serve to seal thy misery.”

“ This might arrive, father, were we to continue within the grasp of St. Mark,” interrupted the Neapolitan ; “ but once beyond his borders, ’t would be a bold interference with the right of a foreign state to lay hand on our persons. More than this, I have a castle, in St. Agata, that will defy their most secret means, until events might happen which should render it more prudent for them to desist than to persevere.”

“ This reason hath force wert thou within the walls of St. Agata, instead of being, as thou art, among the canals.”

“ Here is one of Calabria, a vassal born of mine, a certain Stefano Milano, the padrone of a Sorrentine felucca, now lying in the port ; the man is in strict amity with my own gondolier—he who was third in this day’s race. Art thou ill, father, that thou appearest troubled ?”

"Proceed with thy expedient," answered the monk, motioning that he wished not to be observed.

"My faithful Gino reports that this Stefano is on the canals, on some errand of the republic, as he thinks, for though the mariner is less disposed to familiarity than is wont, he hath let drop hints that lead to such a conclusion—the felucca is ready, from hour to hour, to put upon the sea, and doubt not the padrone would rather serve his natural lord than these double-dealing miscreants of the senate. I can pay as well as they, if served to my pleasure; and I can punish too, when offended."

"There is reason in this, Signore, wert thou beyond the wiles of this mysterious city. But in what manner canst thou embark, without drawing the notice of those, who doubtless watch our movements, on thy person?"

"There are maskers on the canals at all hours, and if Venice be so impertinent in her system of watchfulness, thou knowest, father, that, without extraordinary motive, that disguise is sacred. Without this narrow privilege, the town would not be habitable a day."

"I fear the result;" observed the hesitating monk, while it was evident, from the thoughtfulness of his countenance, that he calculated the chances of the adventure. "If known and arrested, we are all lost!"

"Trust me, father, that thy fortune shall not be forgotten, even in that unhappy issue. I have an uncle, as you know, high in the favor of the pontiff, and who wears the scarlet hat. I pledge to you the honor of a cavalier, all my interest with this relative, to gain such intercession from the church as shall weaken the blow to her servant."

The features of the Carmelite flushed, and, for the first time, the ardent young noble observed

around his ascetic mouth an expression of worldly pride.

"Thou hast unjustly rated my apprehensions, Lord of St. Agata," he said; "I fear not for myself, but for others. This tender and lovely child hath not been confided to my care, without creating a parental solicitude in her behalf, and"—he paused, and seemed to struggle with himself—"I have too long known the mild and womanly virtues of Donna Florinda, to witness, with indifference, her exposure to a near and fearful danger. Abandon our charge, we cannot; nor do I see in what manner, as prudent and watchful guardians, we may in any manner consent to this risk. Let us hope that they who govern will yet consult the honor and happiness of Donna Violetta."

"That were to hope the winged lion would become a lamb, or the dark and soulless senate a community of self-mortifying and godly Carthusians! No, reverend monk, we must seize the happy moment, and none is likely to be more fortunate than this, or trust our hopes to a cold and calculating policy, that disregards all motives but its own object. An hour, nay, half the time, would suffice to apprise the mariner, and ere the morning light, we might see the domes of Venice sinking into their own hated Lagunes."

"These are the plans of confident youth, quickened by passion. Believe me, son, it is not easy as thou imaginest, to mislead the agents of the police. This palace could not be quitted, the felucca entered, or any one of the many necessary steps hazarded, without drawing upon us their eyes. Hark!—I hear the wash of oars—a gondola is even now at the water-gate!"

Donna Florinda went hastily to the balcony, and as quickly returned to report that she had seen an officer of the republic enter the palace. There was

no time to lose, and Don Camillo was again urged to conceal himself in the little oratory. This necessary caution had hardly been observed before the door of the room opened, and the privileged messenger of the senate announced his own appearance. It was the very individual who had presided at the fearful execution of the fisherman, and who had already announced the cessation of the Signor Gradenigo's powers. His eye glanced suspiciously around the room, as he entered, and the Carmelite trembled in every limb, at the look which encountered his own. But all immediate apprehensions vanished, when the usual artful smile, with which he was wont to soften his disagreeable communications, took place of the momentary expression of a vague and an habitual suspicion.

"Noble lady," he said, bowing with deference to the rank of her he addressed, "you may learn by this assiduity, on the part of their servant, the interest which the senate takes in your welfare. Anxious to do you pleasure, and ever attentive to the wishes of one so young, it hath been decided to give you the amusement and variety of another scene, at a season when the canals of our city become disagreeable, from their warmth and the crowds which live in the air. I am sent to request you will make such preparations, as may befit your convenience during a few months' residence in a purer atmosphere, and that this may be done speedily; as your journey, always to prevent discomfort to yourself, will commence before the rising of the sun."

"This is short notice, Signore, for a female about to quit the dwelling of her ancestors!"

"St. Mark suffers his love and parental care to overlook the vain ceremonies of form. It is thus the parent dealeth with the child. There is little need of unusual notice, since it will be the business of the government to see all that is necessary dis-

patched to the residence, which is to be honored with the presence of so illustrious a lady."

"For myself, Signore, little preparation is needed. But I fear the train of servitors, that befit my condition, will require more leisure for their arrangements."

"Lady, that embarrassment hath been foreseen, and to remove it, the council hath decided to supply you with the only attendant you will require, during an absence from the city which will be so short."

"How, Signore! am I to be separated from my people?"

"From the hired menials of your palace, lady, to be confided to those who will serve your person, from a nobler motive."

"And my maternal friend—my ghostly adviser?"

"They will be permitted to repose from their trusts, during your absence."

An exclamation from Donna Florinda, and an involuntary movement of the monk, betrayed their mutual concern. Donna Violetta suppressed the exhibition of her own resentment, and of her wounded affections, by a powerful effort, in which she was greatly sustained by her pride; but she could not entirely conceal the anguish of another sort, that was seated in her eye.

"Do I understand that this prohibition extends to her, who, in common, serves my person?"

"Signora, such are my instructions."

"Is it expected that Violetta Tiepolo will do these menial offices for herself?"

"Signora, no. A most excellent and agreeable attendant has been provided for that duty. Annina," he continued, approaching the door, "thy noble mistress is impatient to see thee."

As he spoke, the daughter of the wine-seller appeared. She wore an air of assumed humility, but

it was accompanied by a secret mien, that betrayed independence of the pleasure of her new mistress.

“And this damsel is to be my nearest confidant!” exclaimed Donna Violetta, after studying the artful and demure countenance of the girl, a moment, with a dislike she did not care to conceal.

“Such hath been the solicitude of your illustrious guardians, lady. As the damsel is instructed in all that is necessary, I will intrude no longer, but take my leave, recommending that you improve the hours, which are now few, between this and the rising sun, that you may profit by the morning breeze in quitting the city.”

The officer glanced another look around the room, more, however, through habitual caution than any other reason, bowed, and departed.

A profound and sorrowful silence succeeded. Then the apprehension that Don Camillo might mistake their situation and appear, flashed upon the mind of Violetta, and she hastened to apprise him of the danger, by speaking to the new attendant.

“Thou hast served before this, Annina?” she asked so loud as to permit the words to be heard in the oratory.

“Never a lady so beautiful and illustrious, Signora. But I hope to make myself agreeable to one that I hear is kind to all around her.”

“Thou art not new to the flattery of thy class; go then, and acquaint my ancient attendants with this sudden resolution, that I may not disappoint the council by tardiness. I commit all to thy care, Annina, since thou knowest the pleasure of my guardians—those without will furnish the means.”

The girl lingered, and her watchful observers noted suspicion and hesitation in her reluctant manner of compliance. She obeyed, however, leaving the room with the domestic Donna Violetta summoned from the antechamber. The instant the door

was closed behind her, Don Camillo was in the group, and the whole four stood regarding each other in a common panic.

“Canst thou still hesitate, father?” demanded the lover.

“Not a moment, my son, did I see the means of accomplishing flight.”

“How! Thou wilt not then desert me!” exclaimed Violetta, kissing his hands in joy. “Nor thou, my second mother!”

“Neither,” answered the governess, who possessed intuitive means of comprehending the resolutions of the monk; “we will go with thee, love, to the Castle of St. Agata, or to the dungeon of St. Mark.”

“Virtuous and sainted Florinda, receive my thanks!” cried the reprieved Violetta, clasping her hands on her bosom, with an emotion in which piety and gratitude were mingled.—“Camillo, we await thy guidance.”

“Refrain,” observed the monk,—“a footstep—thy concealment.”

Don Camillo was scarce hid from view, when Annina reappeared. She had the same suspicious manner of glancing her eye around, as the official, and it would seem, by the idle question she put, that her entrance had some other object than the mere pretence which she made of consulting her new mistress’s humor in the color of a robe.

“Do as thou wilt, girl,” said Violetta, with impatience; “thou knowest the place of my intended retirement, and canst judge of the fitness of my attire. Hasten thy preparations, that I be not the cause of delay. Enrico, attend my new maid to the wardrobe.”

Annina reluctantly withdrew, for she was far too much practised in wiles not to distrust this unexpected compliance with the will of the council, or not to perceive that she was admitted with displeasure to

the discharge of her new duties. As the faithful domestic of Donna Violetta kept at her side, she was fain, however, to submit, and suffered herself to be led a few steps from the door. Suddenly pretending to recollect a new question, she returned with so much rapidity, as to be again in the room, before Enrico could anticipate the intention.

“Daughter, complete thy errands, and forbear to interrupt our privacy,” said the monk, sternly.—“I am about to confess this penitent, who may pine long for the consolations of the holy office, ere we meet again. If thou hast not aught urgent, withdraw, ere thou seriously givest offence to the church.”

The severity of the Carmelite’s tone, and the commanding, though subdued gleaming of his eye, had the effect to awe the girl. Quailing before his look, and in truth startled at the risk she ran in offending against opinions so deeply seated in the minds of all, and from which her own superstitious habits were far from free, she muttered a few words of apology, and finally withdrew. There was another uneasy and suspicious glance thrown around her, however, before the door was closed. When they were once more alone, the monk motioned for silence to the impetuous Don Camillo, who could scarce restrain his impatience until the intruder departed.

“Son, be prudent,” he said; “we are in the midst of treachery; in this unhappy city none know in whom they can confide.”

“I think we are sure of Enrico,” said the Donna Florinda, though the very doubts she affected not to feel, lingered in the tones of her voice.

“It matters not, daughter.—He is ignorant of the presence of Don Camillo, and in that we are safe. Duke of Sant’ Agata, if you can deliver us from these toils, we will accompany you.”

A cry of joy was near bursting from the lips of Violetta; but obedient to the eye of the monk, she

turned to her lover, as if to learn his decision. The expression of Don Camillo's face was the pledge of his assent. Without speaking, he wrote hastily, with a pencil, a few words on the envelope of a letter, and inclosing a piece of coin in its folds, he moved with a cautious step to the balcony. A signal was given, and all awaited in breathless silence the answer. Presently they heard the wash of the water, caused by the movement of a gondola beneath the window. Stepping forward again, Don Camillo dropped the paper with such precision, that he distinctly heard the fall of the coin in the bottom of the boat. The gondolier scarce raised his eyes to the balcony, but commencing an air much used on the canals, he swept onward, like one whose duty called for no haste.

"That has succeeded!" said Don Camillo, when he heard the song of Gino. "In an hour my agent will have secured the felucca, and all now depends on our own means of quitting the palace unobserved. My people will await us, shortly, and perhaps 'twould be well to trust openly to our speed in gaining the Adriatic."

"There is a solemn and necessary duty to perform," observed the monk;—"daughters, withdraw to your rooms, and occupy yourselves with the preparation necessary for your flight, which may readily be made to appear as intended to meet the senate's pleasure. In a few minutes I shall summon you hither, again."

Wondering, but obedient, the females withdrew. The Carmelite then made a brief but clear explanation of his intention. Don Camillo listened eagerly, and when the other had done speaking they retired together into the oratory. Fifteen minutes had not passed, before the monk reappeared, alone, and touched the bell, which communicated with the

closet of Violetta. Donna Florinda and her pupil were quickly in the room.

“ Prepare thy mind for the confessional,” said the priest, placing himself, with grave dignity, in that chair which he habitually used, when listening to the self-accusations and failings of his spiritual child.

The brow of Violetta paled and flushed again, as if there lay a heavy sin on her conscience. She turned an imploring look on her maternal monitor, in whose mild features she met an encouraging smile, and then, with a beating heart, though ill-collected for the solemn duty, but with a decision that the occasion required, she knelt on the cushion at the feet of the monk.

The murmured language of Donna Violetta was audible to none but him for whose paternal ear it was intended, and that dread Being whose just anger it was hoped it might lessen. But Don Camillo gazed, through the half-opened door of the chapel, on the kneeling form, the clasped hands, and the uplifted countenance of the beautiful penitent. As she proceeded with the acknowledgment of her errors, the flush on her cheek deepened, and a pious excitement kindled in those eyes, which he had so lately seen glowing with a very different passion. The ingenuous and disciplined soul of Violetta was not so quickly disburthened of its load of sin as that of the more practised mind of the Lord of Sant’ Agata. The latter fancied that he could trace in the movement of her lips the sound of his own name, and a dozen times during the confession, he thought he could even comprehend sentences of which he himself was the subject. Twice the good father smiled, involuntarily, and at each indiscretion, he laid a hand in affection on the bared head of the suppliant. But Violetta ceased to speak, and the absolution was pronounced, with a fervor that the

remarkable circumstances, in which they all stood, did not fail to heighten.

When this portion of his duty was ended, the Carmelite entered the oratory. With steady hands he lighted the candles of the altar, and made the other dispositions for the mass. During this interval Don Camillo was at the side of his mistress, whispering with the warmth of a triumphant and happy lover. The governess stood near the door, watching for the sound of footsteps in the antechamber. The monk then advanced to the entrance of the little chapel, and was about to speak, when a hurried step from Donna Florinda arrested his words. Don Camillo had just time to conceal his person within the drapery of a window, before the door opened and Annina entered.

When the preparations of the altar and the solemn countenance of the priest first met her eye, the girl recoiled, with the air of one rebuked. But rallying her thoughts, with that readiness which had gained her the employment she filled, she crossed herself, reverently, and took a place apart, like one who, while she knew her station, wished to participate in the mysteries of the holy office.

“ Daughter, none who commence this mass with us, can quit the presence, ere it be completed;” observed the monk.

“ Father, it is my duty to be near the person of my mistress, and it is a happiness to be near it on the occasion of this early matin.”

The monk was embarrassed. He looked from one to the other, in indecision, and was about to frame some pretence to get rid of the intruder, when Don Camillo appeared in the middle of the room.

“ Reverend monk, proceed,” he said; “ ’tis but another witness of my happiness.”

While speaking, the noble touched the handle of his sword, significantly, with a finger, and cast a

look at the half-petrified Annina, which effectually controlled the exclamation that was about to escape her. The monk appeared to understand the terms of this silent compact; for with a deep voice he commenced the offices of the mass. The singularity of their situation, the important results of the act in which they were engaged, the impressive dignity of the Carmelite, and the imminent hazard which they all ran of exposure, together with the certainty of punishment for their daring to thwart the will of Venice, if betrayed, caused a deeper feeling, than that which usually pervades a marriage ceremony, to preside at nuptials thus celebrated. The youthful Violetta trembled at every intonation of the solemn voice of the monk, and towards the close, she leaned in helplessness on the arm of the man to whom she had just plighted her vows. The eye of the Carmelite kindled, as he proceeded with the office, however; and, long ere he had done, he had obtained such a command over the feelings of even Annina, as to hold her mercenary spirit in awe. The final union was pronounced, and the benediction given.

“ Maria, of pure memory, watch over thy happiness, daughter !” said the monk, for the first time in his life saluting the fair brow of the weeping bride. —“ Duke of Sant’ Agata, may thy patron hear thy prayers, as thou provest kind to this innocent and confiding child !”

“ Amen !—Ha !—we are not too soon united, my Violetta ; I hear the sound of oars.”

A glance from the balcony assured him of the truth of his words, and rendered it apparent that it had now become necessary to take the most decided step of all. A six-oared gondola, of a size suited to endure the waves of the Adriatic at that mild season, and with a pavilion of fit dimensions, stopped at the water-gate of the palace.

"I wonder at this boldness!" exclaimed Don Camillo. "There must be no delay, lest some spy of the republic apprise the police. Away, dearest Violetta—away, Donna Florinda—Father, away!"

The governess and her charge passed swiftly into the inner rooms. In a minute, they returned bearing the caskets of Donna Violetta, and a sufficient supply of necessaries, for a short voyage. The instant they reappeared, all was ready; for Don Camillo had long held himself prepared for this decisive moment, and the self-denying Carmelite had little need of superfluities. It was no moment for unnecessary explanation or trivial objections.

"Our hope is in celerity," said Don Camillo; "secrecy is impossible."

He was still speaking, when the monk led the way from the room. Donna Florinda and the half-breathless Violetta followed; Don Camillo drew the arm of Annina under his own, and in a low voice bid her, at her peril, refuse to obey.

The long suite of outer rooms was passed, without meeting a single observer of the extraordinary movement. But when the fugitives entered the great hall, that communicated with the principal stairs, they found themselves in the centre of a dozen menials of both sexes.

"Place," cried the Duke of Sant' Agata, whose person and voice were alike unknown to them. "Your mistress will breathe the air of the canals."

Wonder and curiosity were alive in every countenance, but suspicion and eager attention were uppermost in the features of many. The foot of Donna Violetta had scarcely touched the pavement of the lower hall, when several menials glided down the flight, and quitted the palace, by its different outlets. Each sought those who engaged him in the service. One flew along the narrow streets of the

islands, to the residence of the Signor Gradenigo; another sought his son; and one, ignorant of the person of him he served, actually searched an agent of Don Camillo, to impart a circumstance in which that noble was himself so conspicuous an actor. To such a pass of corruption had double-dealing and mystery reduced the household of the fairest and richest in Venice! The gondola lay at the marble steps of the water-gate, held against the stones by two of its crew. Don Camillo saw, at a glance, that the masked gondoliers had neglected none of the precautions he had prescribed, and he inwardly commended their punctuality. Each wore a short rapier at his girdle, and he fancied he could trace beneath the folds of their garments, evidence of the presence of the clumsy fire-arms, in use at that period. These observations were made, while the Carmelite and Violetta entered the boat. Donna Florinda followed, and Annina was about to imitate her example, when she was arrested by the arm of Don Camillo.

“Thy service ends here,” whispered the bridegroom. “Seek another mistress; in fault of a better, thou mayest devote thyself to Venice.”

The little interruption caused Don Camillo to look backward, and, for a single moment, he paused to scrutinize the group of eyes that crowded the hall of the palace, at a respectful distance. •

“Adieu, my friends!” he added; “Those among ye who love your mistress shall be remembered.”

He would have said more, but a rude seizure of his arms caused him to turn hastily away. He was firm in the grasp of the two gondoliers who had landed. While he was yet in too much astonishment to struggle, Annina, obedient to a signal, darted past him and leaped into the boat. The oars fell into the water; Don Camillo was repelled by a violent shove backward into the hall, the gondoliers

stepped lightly into their places, and the gondola swept away from the steps, beyond the power of him they left to follow.

“Gino!—miscreant!—what means this treachery?”

The moving of the parting gondola was accompanied by no other sound than the usual washing of the water. In speechless agony, Don Camillo saw the boat glide, swifter and swifter at each stroke of the oars, along the canal, and then, whirling round the angle of a palace, disappear.

Venice admitted not of pursuit like another city, for there was no passage along the canal taken by the gondola, but by water. Several of the boats used by the family, lay within the piles on the great canal, at the principal entrance, and Don Camillo was about to rush into one, and to seize its oars, with his own hands, when the usual sounds announced the approach of a gondola from the direction of the bridge, that had so long served as a place of concealment to his own domestic. It soon issued from the obscurity, cast by the shadows of the houses, and proved to be a large gondola pulled, like the one which had just disappeared, by six masked gondoliers. The resemblance between the equipments of the two was so exact, that at first not only the wondering Camillo, but all the others present fancied the latter, by some extraordinary speed, had already made the tour of the adjoining palaces, and was once more approaching the private entrance of that of Donna Violetta.

“Gino!” cried the bewildered bridegroom.

“Signore mio?” answered the faithful domestic.

“Draw nearer, varlet. What meaneth this idle trifling, at a moment like this?”

Don Camillo leaped a fearful distance, and happily he reached the gondola. To pass the men and rush

into the canopy needed but a moment; to perceive that it was empty was the work of a glance.

“Villains, have you dared to be false!” cried the confounded noble.

At that instant the clock of the city began to tell the hour of two, and it was only as that appointed signal sounded heavy and melancholy on the night-air, that the undeceated Camillo got a certain glimpse of the truth.

“Gino,” he said, repressing his voice, like one summoning a desperate resolution—“Are thy fellows true?”

“As faithful as your own vassals, Signore.”

“And thou didst not fail to deliver the note to my agent?”

“He had it before the ink was dry, eccellenza.”

“The mercenary villain!—He told thee where to find the gondola, equipped as I see it?”

“Signore, he did; and I do the man the justice to say that nothing is wanting, either to speed or comfort.”

“Ay, he even deals in duplicates, so tender is his care!” muttered Don Camillo, between his teeth.—“Pull away, men; your own safety and my happiness now depend on your arms. A thousand ducats if you equal my hopes—my just anger if you disappoint them!”

Don Camillo threw himself on the cushions as he spoke, in bitterness of heart, though he seconded his words by a gesture which bid the men proceed. Gino, who occupied the stern and managed the directing oar, opened a small window in the canopy, which communicated with the interior, and bent to take his master’s directions as the boat sprang ahead. Rising from his stooping posture, the practised gondolier gave a sweep with his blade, which caused the sluggish element of the narrow canal to whirl in ed-

dies, and then the gondola glided into the great canal, as if it obeyed an instinct.

CHAPTER II.

“ Why liest thou so on the green earth ?
‘Tis not the hour of slumber :—why so pale ?”

Cain.

NOTWITHSTANDING his apparent decision, the Duke of Sant' Agata was completely at a loss in what manner to direct his future movements. That he had been duped, by one or more of the agents, to whom he had been compelled to confide his necessary preparations for the flight he had meditated several days, was too certain to admit of his deceiving himself with the hopes, that some unaccountable mistake was the cause of his loss. He saw, at once, that the senate was master of the person of his bride, and he too well knew its power, and its utter disregard of human obligations, when any paramount interest of the state was to be consulted, to doubt for an instant its willingness to use its advantage, in any manner that was most likely to contribute to its own views. By the premature death of her uncle, Donna Violetta had become the heiress of vast estates in the dominions of the church, and a compliance with that jealous and arbitrary law of Venice, which commanded all of its nobles to dispose of any foreign possessions they might acquire, was only suspended on account of her sex, and, as has already been seen, with the hope of disposing of her hand in a manner that would prove more profitable to the republic. With this object still before them, and with the means of accomplish-

ing it in their own hands, the bridegroom well knew that his marriage would not only be denied, but he feared the witnesses of the ceremony would be so disposed of, as to give little reason ever to expect embarrassment from their testimony. For himself, personally, he felt less apprehension, though he foresaw that he had furnished his opponents with an argument that was likely to defer to an indefinite period, if it did not entirely defeat his claims to the disputed succession. But he had already made up his mind to this result, though it is probable that his passion for Violetta had not entirely blinded him to the fact, that her Roman signories would be no unequal offset for the loss. He believed that he might possibly return to his palace with impunity, so far as any personal injury was concerned; for the great consideration he enjoyed in his native land, and the high interest he possessed at the court of Rome, were sufficient pledges that no open violence would be done him. The chief reason why his claim had been kept in suspense, was the wish to profit by his near connexion with the favorite cardinal, and though he had never been able entirely to satisfy the ever-increasing demands of the council, in this respect, he thought it probable that the power of the Vatican would not be spared, to save him from any very imminent personal hazard. Still he had given the state of Venice plausible reasons for severity, and liberty, just at that moment, was of so much importance, that he dreaded falling into the hands of the officials, as one of the greatest misfortunes which could momentarily overtake him. He so well knew the crooked policy of those with whom he had to deal, that he believed he might be arrested solely that the government could make an especial merit of his future release, under circumstances of so seeming gravity. His order to Gino, therefore, had been to pull down the principal passage toward the port.

Before the gondola, which sprung at each united effort of its crew, like some bounding animal, entered among the shipping, its master had time to recover his self-possession, and to form some hasty plans for the future. Making a signal for the crew to cease rowing, he came from beneath the canopy. Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, boats were plying on the water within the town, and the song was still audible on the canals. But among the mariners a general stillness prevailed, such as befitted their toil during the day, and their ordinary habits.

“Call the first idle gondolier of thy acquaintance hither, Gino,” said Don Camillo, with assumed calmness; “I would question him.”

In less than a minute he was gratified.

“Hast seen any strongly manned gondola plying, of late, in this part of the canal?” demanded Don Camillo, of the man they had stopped.

“None, but this of your own, Signore; which is the fastest of all that passed beneath the Rialto, in this day’s regatta.”

“How knowest thou, friend, aught of the speed of my boat?”

“Signore, I have pulled an oar on the canals of Venice six-and-twenty years, and I do not remember to have seen a gondola move more swiftly on them than did this very boat but a few minutes ago, when it dashed among the feluccas, further down in the port, as if it were again running for the oar. *Corpo di Bacco!* There are rich wines in the palaces of the nobles, that men can give such life to wood!”

“Whither did we steer?” eagerly asked Don Camillo.

“Blessed San Teodoro! I do not wonder, eccellenza, that you ask that question, for though it is but a moment since, here I see you lying as motionless on the water as a floating weed!”

“Friend, here is silver—addio.”

The gondolier swept slowly onward, singing a strain in honor of his bark, while the boat of Don Camillo darted ahead. Mistic, felucca, xebec, brigantine, and three-masted ship, were apparently floating past them, as they shot through the maze of shipping, when Gino bent forward and drew the attention of his master to a large gondola, which was pulling with a lazy oar toward them, from the direction of the Lido. Both boats were in a wide avenue in the midst of the vessels, the usual track of those who went to sea, and there was no object whatever between them. By changing the course of his own boat, Don Camillo soon found himself within an oar’s length of the other. He saw, at a glance, it was the treacherous gondola by which he had been duped.

“Draw, men, and follow!” shouted the desperate Neapolitan, preparing to leap into the midst of his enemies.

“You draw against St. Mark!” cried a warning voice from beneath the canopy. “The chances are unequal Signore; for the smallest signal would bring twenty galleys to our succor.”

Don Camillo might have disregarded this menace, had he not perceived that it caused the half-drawn rapiers of his followers to return to their scabbards.

“Robber!” he answered, “restore her whom you have spirited away.”

“Signore, you young nobles are often pleased to play your extravagancies with the servants of the republic. Here are none but the gondoliers and myself.” A movement of the boat permitted Don Camillo to look into the covered part, and he saw that the other uttered no more than the truth. Convinced of the uselessness of further parley, knowing the value of every moment, and believing he

was on a track which might still lead to success, the young Neapolitan signed to his people to go on. The boats parted in silence, that of Don Camillo proceeding in the direction from which the other had just come.

In a short time the gondola of Don Camillo was in an open part of the Guidecca, and entirely beyond the tiers of the shipping. It was so late that the moon had begun to fall, and its light was cast obliquely on the bay, throwing the eastern sides of the buildings and the other objects into shadow. A dozen different vessels were seen, aided by the land-breeze, steering towards the entrance of the port. The rays of the moon fell upon the broad surface of those sides of their canvas which were nearest to the town, and they resembled so many spotless clouds, sweeping the water and floating seaward.

“They are sending my wife to Dalmatia!” cried Don Camillo, like a man on whom the truth began to dawn.

“Signore mio!” exclaimed the astonished Gino.

“I tell thee, sirrah, that this accursed senate hath plotted against my happiness, and having robbed me of thy mistress, hath employed one of the many feluccas that I see, to transport her to some of its strong-holds, on the eastern coast of the Adriatic.”

“Blessed Maria! Signor Duca, and my honoured master; they say that the very images of stone in Venice have ears, and that the horses of bronze will kick, if an evil word is spoken against those up above.”

“Is it not enough, varlet, to draw curses from the meek Job, to rob him of a wife? Hast thou no feeling for thy mistress?”

“I did not dream, eccellenza, that you were so happy as to have the one, or that I was so honored as to have the other.”

“Thou remindest me of my folly, good Gino. In

aiding me on this occasion, thou wilt have thy own fortune in view, as thy efforts, like those of thy fellows, will be made in behalf of the lady to whom I have just plighted a husband's vows."

"San Teodoro help us all, and hint what is to be done! The lady is most happy, Signor Don Camillo, and if I only knew by what name to mention her, she should never be forgotten in any prayer that so humble a sinner might dare to offer."

"Thou hast not forgotten the beautiful lady I drew from the Guidecca?"

"Corpo di Bacco! Your eccellenza floated like a swan, and swam faster than a gull. Forgotten! Signore, no,—I think of it every time I hear a splash in the canals, and every time I think of it I curse the Ancona-man in my heart. St. Theodore forgive me, if it be unlike a Christian to do so. But, though we all tell marvels of what our Lord did in the Guidecca, the dip of its waters is not the marriage-ceremony, nor can we speak with much certainty of beauty, that was seen to so great disadvantage."

"Thou art right, Gino.—But that lady, the illustrious Donna Violetta Tiepolo, the daughter and heiress of a famed senator, is now thy mistress. It remains for us to establish her in the Castle of Sant' Agata, where I shall defy Venice and its agents."

Gino bowed his head in submission, though he cast a look behind, to make sure that none of those agents, whom his master set so openly at defiance, were within ear-shot.

In the mean time the gondola proceeded, for the dialogue in no manner interrupted the exertions of Gino, still holding the direction of the Lido. As the land-breeze freshened, the different vessels in sight glided away, and by the time Don Camillo reached the barrier of sand, which separates the Lagunes from the Adriatic, most of them had glided through the passages, and were now shaping their courses,

according to their different destinations, across the open gulf. The young noble had permitted his people to pursue the direction originally taken, in pure indecision. He was certain that his bride was in one of the many barks in sight, but he possessed no clue to lead him towards the right one, nor any sufficient means of pursuit, were he even master of that important secret. When he landed, therefore, it was with the simple hope of being able to form some general conjecture as to the portion of the republic's dominions, in which he might search for her he had lost, by observing to what part of the Adriatic the different feluccas held their way. He had determined on immediate pursuit, however, and before he quitted the gondola, he once more turned to his confidential gondolier to give the necessary instructions.

"Thou knowest, Gino," he said, "that there is one born a vassal on my estates, here in the port, with a felucca from the Sorrentine shore?"

"I know the man better than I know my own faults, Signore, or even my own virtues."

"Go to him, at once, and make sure of his presence. I have imagined a plan to decoy him into the service of his lord; but I would now know the condition of his vessel."

Gino said a few words in commendation of the zeal of his friend Stefano, and in praise of the Bella Sorrentina, as the gondola receded from the shore; and then he dashed his oar into the water, like a man in earnest to execute the commission.

There is a lonely spot on the Lido di Palestrina, where Catholic exclusion has decreed that the remains of all who die in Venice, without the pale of the church of Rome, shall moulder into their kindred dust. Though it is not distant from the ordinary landing and the few buildings which line the shore, it is a place that, in itself, is no bad emblem

of a hopeless lot. Solitary, exposed equally to the hot airs of the south and the bleak blasts of the Alps, frequently covered with the spray of the Adriatic, and based on barren sands, the utmost that human art, aided by a soil which has been fattened by human remains, can do, has been to create around the modest graves a meager vegetation, that is in slight contrast to the sterility of most of the bank. This place of interment is without the relief of trees, at the present day it is uninclosed, and in the opinions of those who have set it apart for heretic and Jew, it is unblessed. And yet, though condemned alike to this, the last indignity which man can inflict on his fellow, the two proscribed classes furnish a melancholy proof of the waywardness of human passions and prejudice, by refusing to share in common the scanty pittance of earth, which bigotry has allowed for their everlasting repose! While the protestant sleeps by the side of protestant in exclusive obloquy, the children of Israel moulder apart on the same barren heath, sedulous to preserve, even in the grave, the outward distinctions of faith. We shall not endeavor to seek that deeply-seated principle which renders man so callous to the most eloquent and striking appeals to liberality, but rest satisfied with being grateful that we have been born in a land, in which the interests of religion are as little as possible sullied by the vicious contamination of those of life; in which Christian humility is not exhibited beneath the purple, nor Jewish adhesion by intolerance; in which man is left to care for the welfare of his own soul, and in which, so far as the human eye can penetrate, God is worshipped for himself.

Don Camillo Monforte landed near the retired graves of the proscribed. As he wished to ascend the low sand-hills, which have been thrown up by the waves and the winds of the gulf, on the outer

edge of the Lido, it was necessary that he should pass directly across the contemned spot, or make such a circuit as would have been inconvenient. Crossing himself, with a superstition that was interwoven with all his habits and opinions, and loosening his rapier, in order that he might not miss the succor of that good weapon, at need, he moved across the heath tenanted by the despised dead, taking care to avoid the mouldering heaps of earth which lay above the bones of heretic or Jew. He had not threaded more than half the graves, however, when a human form arose from the grass, and seemed to walk like one who mused on the moral that the piles at his feet would be apt to excite. Again Don Camillo touched the handle of his rapier; then moving aside, in a manner to give himself an equal advantage from the light of the moon, he drew near the stranger. His footstep was heard, for the other paused, regarded the approaching cavalier, and folding his arms, as it might be in sign of neutrality, awaited his nearer approach.

“Thou hast chosen a melancholy hour for thy walk, Signore,” said the young Neapolitan; “and a still more melancholy scene. I hope I do not intrude on an Israelite, or a Lutheran, who mourns for his friend?”

“Don Camillo Monforte, I am, like yourself, a Christian.”

“Ha! Thou knowest me—’tis Battista, the gondolier that I once entertained in my household?”

“Signore, ’tis not Battista.”

As he spoke, the stranger faced the moon, in a manner that threw all of its mild light upon his features.

“Jacopo!” exclaimed the duke, recoiling, as did all in Venice habitually, when that speaking eye was unexpectedly met.

“Signore—Jacopo.”

In a moment the rapier of Don Camillo glittered in the rays of the moon.

“Keep thy distance, fellow, and explain the motive that hath brought thee thus across my solitude!”

The Bravo smiled, but his arms maintained their fold.

“I might, with equal justice, call upon the Duke of Sant’ Agata to furnish reasons, why he wanders at this hour among the Hebrew graves.”

“Nay, spare thy pleasantry; I trifle not with men of thy reputation; if any in Venice have thought fit to employ thee against my person, thou wilt have need of all thy courage and skill, ere thou earnest thy fee.”

“Put up thy rapier, Don Camillo; here is none to do you harm. Think you, if employed in the manner you name, I would be in this spot to seek you? Ask yourself whether your visit here was known, or whether it was more than the idle caprice of a young noble, who finds his bed less easy than his gondola. We have met, Duke of Sant’ Agata, when you distrusted my honor less.”

“Thou speakest true, Jacopo;” returned the noble, suffering the point of his rapier to fall from before the breast of the Bravo, though he still hesitated to withdraw the point. “Thou sayest the truth. My visit to this spot is indeed accidental, and thou could’st not have possibly foreseen it. Why art thou here?”

“Why are these here?” demanded Jacopo, pointing to the graves at his feet. “We are born, and we die—that much is known to us all; but the when and the where are mysteries, until time reveals them.”

“Thou art not a man to act without good motive. Though these Israelites could not foresee their

visit to the Lido, thine hath not been without intention."

"I am here, Don Camillo Monforte, because my spirit hath need of room. I want the air of the sea—the canals choke me—I can only breathe in freedom on this bank of sand!"

"Thou hast another reason, Jacopo?"

"Ay, Signore—I lothe yon city of crimes!"

As the Bravo spoke, he shook his hand in the direction of the domes of St. Mark, and the deep tones of his voice appeared to heave up from the depths of his chest.

"This is extraordinary language for a—"

"Bravo; speak the word boldly, Signore—it is no stranger to my ears. But even the stiletto of a Bravo is honorable, compared to that sword of pretended justice which St. Mark wields! The commonest hireling of Italy—he who will plant his dagger in the heart of his friend for two sequins, is a man of open dealing, compared to the merciless treachery of some in yonder town!"

"I understand thee, Jacopo; thou art, at length, proscribed. The public voice, faint as it is in the republic, has finally reached the ears of thy employers, and they withdraw their protection."

Jacopo regarded the noble, for an instant, with an expression so ambiguous, as to cause the latter insensibly to raise the point of his rapier, but when he answered, it was with his ordinary quiet.

"Signor Duca," he said, "I have been thought worthy to be retained by Don Camillo Monforte!"

"I deny it not—and now that thou recallest the occasion, new light breaks in upon me. Villain, to thy faithlessness I owe the loss of my bride!"

Though the rapier was at the very throat of Jacopo, he did not flinch. Gazing at his excited companion, he laughed in a smothered manner, but bitterly.

"It would seem that the Lord of Sant' Agata wishes to rob me of my trade," he said. "Arise, ye Israelites, and bear witness, lest men doubt the fact! A common bravo of the canals is waylaid, among your despised graves, by the proudest Signor of Calabria! You have chosen your spot, in mercy, Don Camillo, for sooner or later this crumbling and sea-worn earth is to receive me. Were I to die at the altar itself, with the most penitent prayer of holy church on my lips, the bigots would send my body to rest among those hungry Hebrews and accursed heretics. Yes, I am a man proscribed, and unfit to sleep with the faithful!"

His companion spoke with so strange a mixture of irony and melancholy, that the purpose of Don Camillo wavered. But remembering his loss, he shook the rapier's point, and continued:—

"Thy taunts and effrontery will not avail thee, knave;" he cried. "Thou knowest that I would have engaged thee as the leader of a chosen band, to favor the flight of one dear from Venice."

"Nothing more true, Signore."

"And thou didst refuse the service?"

"Noble duke, I did."

"Not content with this, having learned the particulars of my project, thou sold the secret to the senate?"

"Don Camillo Monforte, I did not. My engagements with the council would not permit me to serve you; else, by the brightest star of yonder vault! it would have gladdened my heart, to have witnessed the happiness of two young and faithful lovers. No—no—no; they know me not, who think I cannot find pleasure in the joy of another. I told you that I was the senate's,—and there the matter ended."

"And I had the weakness to believe thee, Jacopo, for thou hast a character so strangely compounded

of good and evil, and bearest so fair a name for observance of thy faith, that the seeming frankness of the answer lulled me to security. Fellow, I have been betrayed, and that at the moment when I thought success most sure."

Jacopo manifested interest, but, as he moved slowly on, accompanied by the vigilant and zealous noble, he smiled coldly, like one who had pity for the other's credulity.

"In bitterness of soul, I have cursed the whole race for its treachery ;" continued the Neapolitan.

"This is rather for the priore of St. Mark, than for the ear of one who carries a public stiletto."

"My gondola has been imitated—the liveries of my people copied—my bride stolen.—Thou answerest not, Jacopo ?"

"What answer would you have ? You have been cozened, Signore, in a state, whose very prince dare not trust his secrets to his wife. You would have robbed Venice of an heiress, and Venice has robbed you of a bride. You have played high, Don Camillò, and have lost a heavy stake. You have thought of your own wishes and rights, while you have pretended to serve Venice with the Spaniard."

Don Camillo started in surprise.

"Why this wonder, Signore ?—You forget that I have lived much among those who weigh the chances of every political interest, and that your name is often in their mouths. This marriage is doubly disagreeable to Venice, who has nearly as much need of the bridegroom as of the bride. The council hath long ago forbidden the banns."

"Ay—but the means ?—explain the means by which I have been duped, lest the treachery be ascribed to thee."

"Signore, the very marbles of the city give up their secrets to the state. I have seen much, and

understood much, when my superiors have believed me merely a tool; but I have seen much that even those who employed me could not comprehend. I could have foretold this consummation of your nuptials, had I known of their celebration."

"This thou could'st not have done, without being an agent of their treachery."

"The schemes of the selfish may be foretold; it is only the generous and the honest that baffle calculation. He who can gain a knowledge of the present interest of Venice is master of her dearest secrets of state; for what she wishes she will do, unless the service cost too dear. As for the means —how can they be wanting in a household like yours, Signore?"

"I trusted none but those deepest in my confidence."

"Don Camillo, there is not a servitor in your palace, Gino alone excepted, who is not a hireling of the senate, or of its agents. The very gondoliers, who row you to your daily pleasures, have had their hands crossed with the republic's sequins. Nay, they are not only paid to watch you, but to watch each other."

"Can this be true!"

"Have you ever doubted it, Signore?" asked Jacopo, looking up like one who admired at another's simplicity.

"I knew them to be false—pretenders to a faith that in secret they mock; but I had not believed they dared to tamper with the very menials of my person. This undermining of the security of families is to destroy society at its core!"

"You talk like one who hath not been long a bridegroom, Signore;" said the Bravo with a hollow laugh. "A year hence, you may know what it is to have your own wife turning your secret thoughts into gold."

“ And thou servest them, Jacopo ? ”

“ Who does not, in some manner suited to his habits ? We are not masters of our fortune, Don Camillo, or the Duke of Sant’ Agata would not be turning his influence with a relative, to the advantage of the republic. What I have done hath not been done without bitter penitence, and an agony of soul, that your own light servitude may have spared you, Signore.”

“ Poor Jacopo ! ”

“ If I have lived through it all, ’tis because one mightier than the state hath not deserted me. But, Don Camillo Monforte, there are crimes which pass beyond the powers of man to endure.”

The Bravo shuddered, and he moved among the despised graves, in silence.

“ They have then proved too ruthless even for thee ? ” said Don Camillo, who watched the contracting eye and heaving form of his companion, in wonder.

“ Signore, they have. I have witnessed, this night, a proof of their heartlessness and bad faith, that hath caused me to look forward to my own fate. The delusion is over ; from this hour I serve them no longer.”

The Bravo spoke with deep feeling, and his companion fancied, strange as it was coming from such a man, with an air of wounded integrity. Don Camillo knew that there was no condition of life, however degraded or lost to the world, which had not its own particular opinions of the faith due to its fellows ; and he had seen enough of the sinuous course of the oligarchy of Venice, to understand that it was quite possible its shameless and irresponsible duplicity might offend the principles of even an assassin. Less odium was attached to men of that class, in Italy and at that day, than will be easily imagined in a country like this ; for the radi-

cal defects and the vicious administration of the laws, caused an irritable and sensitive people too often to take into their own hands, the right of redressing their own wrongs. Custom had lessened the odium of the crime, and though society denounced the assassin himself, it is scarcely too much to say, that his employer was regarded with little more disgust than the religious of our time regard the survivor of a private combat. Still it was not usual for nobles like Don Camillo to hold intercourse, beyond that which the required service exacted, with men of Jacopo's cast; but the language and manner of the Bravo so strongly attracted the curiosity, and even the sympathy of his companion, that the latter unconsciously sheathed his rapier and drew nearer.

"Thy penitence and regrets, Jacopo, may lead thee yet nearer to virtue," he said, "than mere abandonment of the senate's service. Seek out some godly priest, and ease thy soul, by confession and prayer."

The Bravo trembled in every limb, and his eye turned wistfully to the countenance of the other.

"Speak, Jacopo; even I will hear thee, if thou would'st remove the mountain from thy breast."

"Thanks, noble Signore! a thousand thanks for this glimpse of sympathy, to which I have long been a stranger! None know how dear a word of kindness is, as he who has been condemned by all, as I have been. I have prayed—I have craved—I have wept for some ear to listen to my tale, and I thought I had found one who would have heard me without scorn, when the cold policy of the senate struck him. I came here to commune with the hated dead, when chance brought us together. Could I—" the Bravo paused and looked doubtfully, again, at his companion.

"Say on, Jacopo."

"I have not dared to trust my secrets even to the confessional, Signore, and can I be so bold as to offer them to you?"

"Truly, it is a strange behest!"

"Signore, it is. You are noble, I am of humble blood. Your ancestors were senators and doges of Venice; while mine have been, since the fishermen first built their huts in the Lagunes, laborers on the canals, and rowers of gondolas. You are powerful, and rich, and courted; while I am denounced, and, in secret, I fear, condemned. In short, you are Don Camillo Monforte, and I am Jacopo Frontoni!"

Don Camillo was touched, for the Bravo spoke without bitterness, and in deep sorrow.

"I would thou wert at the confessional, poor Jacopo!" he said; "I am little able to give ease to such a burthen."

"Signore, I have lived too long, shut out from the good wishes of my fellows, and I can bear with it no longer. The accursed senate may cut me off without warning, and then who will stop to look at my grave. Signore, I must speak, or die!"

"Thy case is piteous, Jacopo!—Thou hast need of ghostly counsel."

"Here is no priest, Signore, and I carry a weight past bearing. The only man who has shown interest in me, for three long and dreadful years, is gone!"

"But he will return, poor Jacopo."

"Signore, he will never return. He is with the fishes of the Lagunes."

"By thy hand, monster!"

"By the justice of the illustrious republic," said the Bravo, with a smothered but bitter smile.

"Ha! they are then awake to the acts of thy class? Thy repentance is the fruit of fear!"

Jacopo seemed choked. He had evidently counted on the awakened sympathy of his companion,

notwithstanding the difference in their situations, and to be thus thrown off again, unmanned him. He shuddered, and every muscle and nerve appeared about to yield its power. Touched by so unequivocal signs of suffering, Don Camillo kept close at his side, reluctant to enter more deeply into the feelings of one of his known character, and yet unable to desert a fellow-creature in so grievous agony.

“Signor Duca,” said the Bravo, with a pathos in his voice that went to the heart of his auditor, “leave me. If they ask for a proscribed man, let them come here; in the morning they will find my body near the graves of the heretics.”

“Speak, I will hear thee.”

Jacopo looked up with doubt expressed on his features.

“Unburthen thyself; I will listen, though thou recounted the assassination of my dearest friend.”

The oppressed Bravo gazed at him, as if he still distrusted his sincerity. His face worked, and his look became still more wistful; but as Don Camillo faced the moon, and betrayed the extent of his sympathy, the other burst into tears.

“Jacopo, I will hear thee—I will hear thee, poor Jacopo!” cried Don Camillo, shocked at this exhibition of distress in one so stern by nature. A wave from the hand of the Bravo silenced him, and Jacopo, struggling with himself for a moment, spoke.

“You have saved a soul from perdition, Signore,” he said, smothering his emotion. “If the happy knew how much power belongs to a single word of kindness—a glance of feeling, when given to the despised, they would not look so coldly on the miserable. This night must have been my last, had you cast me off without pity—but you will hear my tale, Signore—you will not scorn the confession of a Bravo?”

"I have promised. Be brief, for at this moment I have great care of my own."

"Signore, I know not the whole of your wrongs, but they will not be less likely to be redressed for this grace."

Jacopo made an effort to command himself, when he commenced his tale.

The course of the narrative does not require that we should accompany this extraordinary man, through the relation of the secrets he imparted to Don Camillo. It is enough, for our present purposes, to say, that, as he proceeded, the young Calabrian noble drew nearer to his side, and listened with growing interest. The Duke of Sant' Agata scarcely breathed, while his companion, with that energy of language and feeling which marks Italian character, recounted his secret sorrows, and the scenes in which he had been an actor. Long before he was done, Don Camillo had forgotten his own private causes of concern, and, by the time the tale was finished, every shade of disgust had given place to an ungovernable expression of pity. In short, so eloquent was the speaker, and so interesting the facts with which he dealt, that he seemed to play with the sympathies of the listener, as the improvisatore of that region is known to lead captive the passions of the admiring crowd.

During the time Jacopo was speaking, he and his wondering auditor had passed the limits of the despised cemetery; and as the voice of the former ceased, they stood on the outer beach of the Lido. When the low tones of the Bravo were no longer audible, they were succeeded by the sullen wash of the Adriatic.

"This surpasseth belief!" Don Camillo exclaimed, after a long pause, which had only been disturbed by the rush and retreat of the waters.

"Signore, as holy Maria is kind! it is true."

“ I doubt you not, Jacopo—poor Jacopo ! I cannot distrust a tale thus told ! Thou hast, indeed, been a victim of their hellish duplicity, and well mayest thou say, the load was past bearing. What is thy intention ?”

“ I serve them no longer, Don Camillo—I wait only for the last solemn scene, which is now certain, and then I quit this city of deceit, to seek my fortune in another region. They have blasted my youth, and loaded my name with infamy.—God may yet lighten the load !”

“ Reproach not thyself beyond reason, Jacopo, for the happiest and most fortunate of us all are not above the power of temptation. Thou knowest that even my name and rank have not, altogether, protected me from their arts.”

“ I know them capable, Signore, of deluding angels ! Their arts are only surpassed by their means, and their pretence of virtue by their indifference to its practice.”

“ Thou sayest true, Jacopo : the truth is never in greater danger, than when whole communities lend themselves to the vicious deception of seemliness, and without truth there is no virtue. This it is to substitute profession for practice—to use the altar for a worldly purpose—and to bestow power without any other responsibility than that which is exacted by the selfishness of caste ! Jacopo—poor Jacopo ! thou shalt be my servitor—I am lord of my own seignories, and once rid of this specious republic, I charge myself with the care of thy safety and fortunes. Be at peace as respects thy conscience : I have interest near the holy see, and thou shalt not want absolution !”

The gratitude of the Bravo was more vivid in feeling than in expression. He kissed the hand of Don Camillo, but it was with a reservation of self-respect, that belonged to the character of the man.

“A system like this of Venice,” continued the musing noble, “leaves none of us masters of our own acts. The wiles of such a combination are stronger than the will. It cloaks its offences against right in a thousand specious forms, and it enlists the support of every man, under the pretence of a sacrifice for the common good. We often fancy ourselves simple dealers in some justifiable state intrigue, when in truth we are deep in sin. Falsehood is the parent of all crimes, and in no case has it a progeny so numerous, as that in which its own birth is derived from the state. I fear I may have made sacrifices, to this treacherous influence, I could wish forgotten.”

Though Don Camillo soliloquized, rather than addressed his companion, it was evident, by the train of his thoughts, that the narrative of Jacopo had awakened disagreeable reflections, on the manner in which he had pushed his own claims, with the senate. Perhaps he felt the necessity of some apology to one who, though so much his inferior in rank, was so competent to appreciate his conduct, and who had just denounced in the strongest language, his own fatal subserviency to the arts of that irresponsible and meretricious body.

Jacopo uttered a few words of a general nature, but such as had a tendency to quiet the uneasiness of his companion; after which, with a readiness that proved him qualified for the many delicate missions with which he had been charged, he ingeniously turned the discourse to the recent abduction of Donna Violetta, with the offer of rendering his new employer all the services in his power to regain his bride.

“That thou mayest know all thou hast undertaken,” rejoined Don Camillo, “listen, Jacopo, and I will conceal nothing from thy shrewdness.”

The Duke of Sant’ Agata now briefly, but expli-

citly, laid bare to his companion all his own views and measures, with respect to her he loved, and all those events, with which the reader has already become acquainted.

The Bravo gave great attention to the minutest parts of the detail, and more than once, as the other proceeded, he smiled to himself, like a man who was able to trace the secret means, by which this or that intrigue had been effected. The whole was just related, when the sound of a footstep announced the return of Gino.

CHAPTER III.

“Pale she look’d,
Yet cheerful; though methought, once, if not twice,
She wiped away a tear that would be coming.”

ROGERS.

THE hours passed as if naught had occurred, within the barriers of the city, to disturb their progress. On the following morning men proceeded to their several pursuits, of business or of pleasure, as had been done for ages, and none stopped to question his neighbor of the scene which might have taken place during the night. Some were gay, and others sorrowing; some idle, and others occupied; here one toiled, there another sported; and Venice presented, as of wont, its noiseless, suspicious, busy, mysterious, and yet stirring throngs, as it had before done at a thousand similar risings of the sun.

The menials lingered around the water-gate of Donna Violetta’s palace, with distrustful but cautious faces, scarce whispering among themselves their secret suspicions of the fate of their mistress. The

residence of the Signor Gradenigo presented its usual gloomy magnificence, while the abode of Don Camillo Monforte betrayed no sign of the heavy disappointment which its master had sustained. The Bella Sorrentina still lay in the port, with a yard on deck, while the crew repaired its sail in the lazy manner of mariners, who work without excitement.

The Lagunes were dotted with the boats of fishermen, and travellers arrived and departed from the city, by the well-known channels of Fusina and Mestre. Here, some adventurer from the north quitted the canals, on his return towards the Alps, carrying with him a pleasing picture of the ceremonies he had witnessed, mingled with some crude conjectures of that power which predominated in the suspected state; and there, a countryman of the Main sought his little farm, satisfied with the pageants and regatta of the previous day. In short, all seemed as usual, and the events we have related remained a secret with the actors, and that mysterious council which had so large a share in their existence.

As the day advanced, many a sail was spread for the pillars of Hercules, or the genial Levant, and feluccas, mystics and golettes, went and came as the land or sea-breeze prevailed. Still the mariner of Calabria lounged beneath the awning which sheltered his deck, or took his siesta on a pile of old sails, which were ragged with the force of many a hot sirocco. As the sun fell, the gondolas of the great and idle began to glide over the water; and when the two squares were cooled by the air of the Adriatic, the Broglio began to fill with those privileged to pace its vaulted passage. Among these came the Duke of Sant' Agata, who, though an alien to the laws of the republic, being of so illustrious descent, and of claims so equitable, was received among the senators, in their moments of ease, as a welcome

sharer in this vain distinction. He entered the Broglio at the wonted hour, and with his usual composure, for he trusted to his secret influence at Rome, and something to the success of his rivals, for impunity. Reflection had shown Don Camillo that, as his plans were known to the council, they would long since have arrested him, had such been their intention ; and it had also led him to believe, that the most efficient manner of avoiding the personal consequences of his adventure, was to show confidence in his own power to withstand them. When he appeared, therefore, leaning on the arm of a high officer of the papal embassy, and with an eye that spoke assurance in himself, he was greeted, as usual, by all who knew him, as was due to his rank and expectations. Still Don Camillo walked among the patricians of the republic with novel sensations. More than once he thought he detected, in the wandering glances of those with whom he conversed, signs of their knowledge of his frustrated attempt, and more than once, when he least suspected such scrutiny, his countenance was watched, as if the observer sought some evidence of his future intentions. Beyond this, none might have discovered that an heiress of so much importance had been so near being lost to the state, or, on the other hand, that a bridegroom had been robbed of his bride. Habitual art, on the part of the state, and resolute but wary intention, on the part of the young noble, concealed all else from observation.

In this manner the day passed, not a tongue in Venice, beyond those which whispered in secret, making any allusion to the incidents of our tale.

Just as the sun was setting, a gondola swept slowly up to the water-gate of the ducal palace. The gondolier landed, fastened his boat in the usual manner to the stepping-stones, and entered the court. He wore a mask, for the hour of disguise had come, and

his attire was so like the ordinary fashion of men of his class, as to defeat recognition by its simplicity. Glancing an eye about him, he entered the building by a private door.

The edifice in which the Doges of Venice dwelt still stands a gloomy monument of the policy of the republic, furnishing evidence, in itself, of the spacious character of the prince whom it held. It is built around a vast but gloomy court, as is usual with nearly all of the principal edifices of Europe. One of its fronts forms a side of the piazzetta, so often mentioned, and another lines the quay next the port. The architecture of these two exterior faces of the palace renders the structure remarkable. A low portico, which forms the Broglio, sustains a row of massive oriental windows, and above these again lies a pile of masonry, slightly relieved by apertures, which reverses the ordinary uses of the arts. A third front is nearly concealed by the cathedral of St. Mark, and the fourth is washed by its canal. The public prison of the city forms the other side of this canal, eloquently proclaiming the nature of the government by the close approximation of the powers of legislation and of punishment. The famous Bridge of Sighs is the material, and we might add the metaphorical, link between the two. The latter edifice stands on the quay, also, and though less lofty and spacious, in point of architectural beauty it is the superior structure, though the quaintness and unusual style of the palace is most apt to attract attention.

The masked gondolier soon reappeared beneath the arch of the water-gate, and with a hurried step he sought his boat. It required but a minute to cross the canal, to land on the opposite quay, and to enter the public door of the prison. It would seem that he had some secret means of satisfying the vigilance of the different keepers, for bolts were drawn,

and doors unlocked, with little question, wherever he presented himself. In this manner he quickly passed all the outer barriers of the palace, and reached a part of the building, which had the appearance of being fitted for the accommodation of a family. Judging from the air of all around him, those who dwelt there took the luxury of their abode but little into the account, though neither the furniture nor the rooms were wanting in most of the necessaries, suited to people of their class and the climate, and in that age.

The gondolier had ascended a private stairway, and he was now before a door, which had none of those signs of a prison, that so freely abounded in other parts of the building. He paused to listen, and then tapped, with singular caution.

“Who is without?” asked a gentle female voice, at the same instant that the latch moved and fell again, as if she within waited to be assured of the character of her visitor, before she opened the door

“A friend to thee, Gelsomina;” was the answer.

“Nay, here all are friends to the keepers, if words can be believed. You must name yourself, or go elsewhere for your answer.”

The gondolier removed the mask a little, which had altered his voice as well as concealed his face.

“It is I, Gessina,” he said, using the diminutive of her name.

The bolts grated, and the door was hurriedly opened.

“It is wonderful that I did not know thee, Carlo!” said the female, with eager simplicity; “but thou takest so many disguises of late, and so counterfeitest strange voices, that thine own mother might have distrusted her ear.”

The gondolier paused to make certain they were alone; then, laying aside the mask altogether, he exposed the features of the Bravo.

"Thou knowest the need of caution," he added, "and wilt not judge me harshly."

"I said not that, Carlo—but thy voice is so familiar, that I thought it wonderful thou could'st speak as a stranger."

"Hast thou aught for me?"

The gentle girl, for she was both young and gentle, hesitated.

"Hast thou aught new, Gelsomina?" repeated the Bravo, reading her innocent face with his searching glance.

"Thou art fortunate in not being sooner in the prison. I have just had a visitor. Thou would'st not have liked to be seen, Carlo?"

"Thou knowest I have good reasons for coming masked. I might, or I might not have disliked thy acquaintance, as he should have proved."

"Nay, now thou judgest wrong;" returned the female, hastily, "I had no other, here, but my cousin, Annina."

"Dost thou think me jealous?" said the Bravo, smiling in kindness, as he took her hand. "Had it been thy cousin Pietro, or Michele, or Roberto, or any other youth of Venice, I should have no other dread than that of being known."

"But it was only Annina—my cousin, Annina, whom thou hast never seen—and I have no cousins Pietro, and Michele, and Roberto. We are not many, Carlo. Annina has a brother, but he never comes hither. Indeed it is long since she has found it convenient to quit her trade to come to this dreary place. Few children of sisters see each other so seldom as Annina and I!"

"Thou art a good girl, Gessina, and art always to be found near thy mother. Hast thou naught in particular, for my ear?"

Again the soft eyes of Gelsomina, or Gessina, as she was familiarly called, dropped to the floor—but

raising them, ere he could note the circumstance, she hurriedly continued the discourse.

"I fear Annina will return, or I would go with thee, at once."

"Is this cousin of thine still here, then?" asked the Bravo, with uneasiness.—"Thou knowest I would not be seen."

"Fear not. She cannot enter without touching that bell, for she is above with my poor bed-ridden mother. Thou canst go into the inner room, as usual, when she comes, and listen to her idle discourse, if thou wilt—or—but we have not time—for Annina comes seldom, and I know not why, but she seems to love a sick room little, as she never stays many minutes with her aunt."

"Thou would'st have said, or I might go on my errand, Gessina?"

"I would, Carlo—but I am certain we should be recalled by my impatient cousin."

"I can wait; I am patient when with thee, dearest Gessina."

"Hist!—'Tis my cousin's step.—Thou canst go in."

While she spoke, a small bell rang, and the Bravo withdrew into the inner room, like one accustomed to that place of retreat. He left the door ajar, for the darkness of the closet sufficiently concealed his person. In the mean time, Gelsomina opened the outer door for the admission of her visitor. At the first sound of the latter's voice, Jacopo, who had little suspected the fact from a name which was so common, recognized the artful daughter of the wine-seller.

"Thou art at thy ease, here, Gelsomina," cried the latter, entering and throwing herself into a seat, like one fatigued. "Thy mother is better, and thou art truly mistress of the house."

“I would I were not, Annina, for I am young to have this trust, with this affliction.”

“It is not so insupportable, Gessina, to be mistress within doors, at seventeen! Authority is sweet, and obedience is odious.”

“I have found neither so, and I will give up the first with joy, whenever my poor mother shall be able to take command of her own family, again.”

“This is well, Gessina, and does credit to the good father confessor. But authority is dear to woman, and so is liberty. Thou wast not with the maskers yesterday, in the square?”

“I seldom wear a disguise, and I could not quit my mother.”

“Which means that thou wouldst have been glad to do it. Thou hast good reason for thy regrets, since a gayer marriage of the sea, or a braver regatta, has not been witnessed in Venice, since thou wast born. But the first was to be seen from thy window?”

“I saw the galley of state sweeping toward the Lido, and the train of patricians on its deck; but little else.”

“No matter. Thou shalt have as good an idea of the pageant as if thou hadst played the part of the doge himself. First came the men of the guard, with their ancient dresses—”

“Nay, this I remember to have often seen; for the same show is kept from year to year.”

“Thou art right; but Venice never witnessed such a brave regatta! Thou knowest that the first trial is always between gondolas of many oars, steered by the best esteemed of the canals. Luigi was there, and though he did not win, he more than merited success, by the manner in which he directed his boat. Thou knowest Luigi?”

“I scarce know any in Venice, Annina, for the long illness of my mother, and this unhappy office

of my father, keep me within, when others are on the canals."

"True. Thou art not well placed to make acquaintances. But Luigi is second to no gondolier, in skill or reputation, and he is much the merriest rogue of them all, that put foot on the Lido."

"He was foremost, then, in the grand race?"

"He should have been, but the awkwardness of his fellows, and some unfairness in the crossing, threw him back to be second. 'Twas a sight to behold, that of many noble watermen struggling to maintain or to get a name on the canals. Santa Maria! I would thou could'st have seen it, girl!"

"I should not have been glad to see a friend defeated."

"We must take fortune as it offers. But the most wonderful sight of the day, after all, though Luigi and his fellows did so well, was to see a poor fisherman, named Antonio, in his bare head and naked legs, a man of seventy years, and with a boat no better than that I use to carry liquors to the Lido, entering on the second race, and carrying off the prize!"

"He could not have met with powerful rivals?"

"The best of Venice; though Luigi, having strived for the first, could not enter for the second trial. 'Tis said, too," continued Annina, looking about her with habitual caution, "that one, who may scarce be named in Venice, had the boldness to appear in that regatta masked; and yet the fisherman won! Thou hast heard of Jacopo?"

"The name is common."

"There is but one who bears it now, in Venice.—All mean the same when they say Jacopo."

"I have heard of a monster of that name. Surely he hath not dared to show himself among the nobles, on such a festa!"

"Gessina, we live in an unaccountable country!"

The man walks the piazza with a step as lordly as the doge, at his pleasure, and yet none say aught to him ! I have seen him, at noonday, leaning against the triumphal mast, or the column of San Teodoro, with as proud an air as if he were put there to celebrate a victory of the republic !”

“Perhaps he is master of some terrible secret, which they fear he will reveal ?”

“Thou knowest little of Venice, child ! Holy Maria ! a secret of that kind is a death-warrant of itself. It is as dangerous to know too much, as it is to know too little, when one deals with St. Mark. But they say Jacopo was there, standing eye to eye with the doge, and scaring the senators as if he had been an uncalled spectre from the vaults of their fathers. Nor is this all ; as I crossed the Lagunes this morning, I saw the body of a young cavalier drawn from the water, and those who were near it, said it had the mark of his fatal hand !”

The timid Gelsomina shuddered.

“They who rule,” she said, “will have to answer for this negligence to God, if they let the wretch longer go at large.”

“Blessed St. Mark protect his children ! They say there is much of this sort of sin to answer for—but see the body I did, with my own eyes, in entering the canals this morning.”

“And didst thou sleep on the Lido, that thou wert abroad so early ?”

“The Lido—yes—nay—I slept not, but thou knowest my father had a busy day during the revels, and I am not like thee, Gessina, mistress of the household, to do as I would. But I tarry here to chat with thee, when there is great need of industry at home. Hast thou the package, child, which I trusted to thy keeping, at my last visit ?”

“It is here,” answered Gelsomina, opening a drawer, and handing to her cousin a small but

closely enveloped package, which, unknown to herself, contained some articles of forbidden commerce, and which the other, in her indefatigable activity, had been obliged to secrete for a time. "I had begun to think that thou hadst forgotten it, and was about to send it to thee."

"Gelsomina, if thou lovest me, never do so rash an act! My brother Guiseppe—thou scarce knowest Guiseppe?"

"We have little acquaintance, for cousins."

"Thou art fortunate in thy ignorance. I cannot say what I might of the child of the same parents, but had Guiseppe seen this package, by any accident, it might have brought thee into great trouble!"

"Nay, I fear not thy brother, nor any else," said the daughter of the prison-keeper, with the firmness of innocence; "he could do me no harm for dealing kindly by a relative."

"Thou art right; but he might have caused me great vexation. Sainted Maria! if thou knewest the pain that unthinking and misguided boy gives his family! He is my brother, after all, and you will fancy the rest. Addio, good Gessina; I hope thy father will permit thee to come and visit, at last, those who so much love thee."

"Addio, Annina; thou knowest I would come gladly, but that I scarce quit the side of my poor mother."

The wily daughter of the wine-seller gave her guileless and unsuspecting friend a kiss, and then she was let out and departed.

"Carlo," said the soft voice of Gessina; "thou canst come forth, for we have no further fear of visits."

The Bravo appeared, but with a paleness deeper than common on his cheek. He looked mournfully at the gentle and affectionate being who awaited his return, and when he struggled to answer her ingen-

uous smile, the abortive effort gave his features an expression of ghastliness.

“ Annina has wearied thee with her idle discourse of the regatta, and of murders on the canals. Thou wilt not judge her harshly, for the manner in which she spoke of Giuseppe, who may deserve this, and more. But, I know thy impatience, and I will not increase thy weariness.”

“ Hold, Gessina—this girl is thy cousin?”

“ Have I not told thee so? our mothers are sisters.”

“ And she is here often?”

“ Not as often as she could wish, I am certain, for her aunt has not quitted her room for many, many months.”

“ Thou art an excellent daughter, kind Gessina, and would make all others as virtuous as thyself.—And thou hast been to return these visits?”

“ Never. My father forbids it, for they are dealers in wines, and entertain the gondoliers in revelry. But Annina is blameless for the trade of her parents.”

“ No doubt—and that package? it hath been long in thy keeping.”

“ A month; Annina left it at her last visit, for she was hurried to cross to the Lido. But why these questions? You do not like my cousin, who is giddy, and given to idle conversation, but who, I think, must have a good heart. Thou heard’st the manner in which she spoke of the wretched bravo, Jacopo, and of this late murder?”

“ I did.”

“ Thou could’st not have shown more horror at the monster’s crime thyself, Carlo. Nay, Annina is thoughtless, and she might be less worldly; but she hath, like all of us, a holy aversion to sin. Shall I lead thee to the cell?”

“ Go on.”

"Thy honest nature revolts, Carlo, at the cold villany of the assassin. I have heard much of his murders, and of the manner in which those up above bear with him. They say, in common, that his art surpasseth theirs, and that the officers wait for proof, that they may not do injustice."

"Is the senate so tender, think you?" asked the Bravo, huskily, but motioning for his companion to proceed.

The girl looked sad, like one who felt the force of this question; and she turned away to open a private door, whence she brought forth a little box.

"This is the key, Carlo," she said, showing him one of a massive bunch, "and I am now the sole warder. This much, at least, we have effected; the day may still come when we shall do more."

The Bravo endeavored to smile, as if he appreciated her kindness; but he only succeeded in making her understand his desire to go on. The eye of the gentle-hearted girl lost its gleam of hope in an expression of sorrow, and she obeyed.

CHAPTER IV.

But let us to the roof,
And, when thou hast survey'd the sea, the land,
Visit the narrow cells that cluster there,
As in a place of tombs.

St. Mark's Place.

WE shall not attempt to thread the vaulted galleries, the gloomy corridors, and all the apartments, through which the keeper's daughter led her companion. Those, who have ever entered an extensive prison, will require no description to revive the feel-

ing of pain which it excited, by barred windows, creaking hinges, grating bolts, and all those other signs, which are alike the means and evidence of incarceration. The building, unhappily like most other edifices intended to repress the vices of society, was vast, strong, and intricate within, although, as has been already intimated, of a chaste and simple beauty externally, that might seem to have been adopted in mockery of its destination.

Gelsomina entered a low, narrow, and glazed gallery, when she stopped.

"Thou soughtest me, as wont, beneath the water-gate, Carlo," she asked, "at the usual hour?"

"I should not have entered the prison had I found thee there, for thou knowest I would be little seen. But I bethought me of thy mother, and crossed the canal."

"Thou wast wrong. My mother rests much as she has done, for many months—thou must have seen that we are not taking the usual route to the cell?"

"I have; but as we are not accustomed to meet in thy father's rooms, on this errand, I thought this the necessary direction."

"Hast thou much knowledge of the palace and the prison, Carlo?"

"More than I could wish, good Gelsomina;—but why am I thus questioned, at a moment when I would be otherwise employed?"

The timid and conscious girl did not answer. Her cheek was never bright, for like a flower reared in the shade, it had the delicate hue of her secluded life; but at this question it became pale. Accustomed to the ingenuous habits of the sensitive being at his side, the Bravo studied her speaking features intently. He moved swiftly to a window, and looking out, his eye fell upon a narrow and gloomy canal. Crossing the gallery, he cast a glance beneath him, and saw the same dark watery passage, leading be-

tween the masonry of two massive piles to the quay and the port.

“Gelsomina!” he cried, recoiling from the sight, “this is the Bridge of Sighs!”

“It is, Carlo; hast thou ever crossed it before?”

“Never: nor do I understand why I cross it now. I have long thought that it might one day be my fortune to walk this fatal passage, but I could not dream of such a keeper!”

The eye of Gelsomina brightened, and her smile was cheerful.

“Thou wilt never cross it, to thy harm, with me.”

“Of that I am certain, kind Gessina,” he answered, taking her hand. “But this is a riddle that I cannot explain. Art thou in the habit of entering the palace by this gallery?”

“It is little used, except by the keepers and the condemned, as doubtless thou hast often heard; but yet they have given me the keys, and taught me the windings of the place, in order that I might serve, as usual, for thy guide.”

“Gelsomina, I fear I have been too happy in thy company to note, as prudence would have told me, the rare kindness of the council in permitting me to enjoy it!”

“Dost thou repent, Carlo, that thou hast known me?”

The reproachful melancholy of her voice touched the Bravo, who kissed the hand he held, with Italian fervor.

“I should then repent me of the only hours of happiness I have known for years,” he said. “Thou hast been to me, Gelsomina, like a flower in a desert—a pure spring to a feverish man—a gleam of hope to one suffering under malediction.—No, no; not for a moment have I repented knowing thee, my Gelsomina!”

“Twould not have made my life more happy,

Carlo, to have thought I had added to thy sorrows. I am young, and ignorant of the world, but I know we should cause joy, and not pain, to those we esteem."

"Thy nature would teach thee this gentle lesson. But, is it not strange that one, like me, should be suffered to visit the prison unattended by any other keeper?"

"I had not thought it so, Carlo; but, surely it is not common!"

"We have found so much pleasure in each other, dear Gessina, that we have overlooked what ought to have caused alarm."

"Alarm, Carlo!"

"Or, at least, distrust; for these wily senators do no act of mercy without a motive. But it is now too late to recall the past, if we would; and in that which relates to thee I would not lose the memory of a moment. Let us proceed."

The slight cloud vanished from the face of the mild auditor of the Bravo; but still she did not move.

"Few pass this bridge, they say," she added tremulously, "and enter the world again; and yet thou dost not even ask why we are here, Carlo!"

There was a transient gleam of distrust in the hasty glance of the Bravo, as he shot a look at the undisturbed eye of the innocent being who put this question. But it scarcely remained long enough to change the expression of manly interest she was accustomed to meet in his look.

"Since thou wilt have me curious," he said, "why hast thou come hither, and more than all, being here, why dost thou linger?"

"The season is advanced, Carlo," she answered, speaking scarcely above her breath, "and we should look in vain among the cells."

"I understand thee," he said; "we will proceed." Gelsomina lingered to gaze wistfully into the face

of her companion, but finding no visible sign of the agony he endured, she went on. Jacopo spoke hoarsely, but he was too long accustomed to disguise, to permit the weakness to escape, when he knew how much it would pain the sensitive and faithful being, who had yielded her affections to him, with a singleness and devotion which arose nearly as much from her manner of life, as from natural ingenuousness.

In order that the reader may be enabled to understand the allusions, which seem to be so plain to our lovers, it may be necessary to explain another odious feature in the policy of the republic of Venice.

Whatever may be the pretension of a state, in its acknowledged theories, an unerring clue to its true character is ever to be found in the machinery of its practice. In those governments which are created for the good of the people, force is applied with caution and reluctance, since the protection and not the injury of the weak is their object; whereas the more selfish and exclusive the system becomes, the more severe and ruthless are the coercive means employed by those in power. Thus, in Venice, whose whole political fabric reposed on the narrow foundation of an oligarchy, the jealousy of the senate brought the engines of despotism in absolute contact with even the pageantry of their titular prince, and the palace of the doge himself was polluted by the presence of the dungeons. The princely edifice had its summer and winter cells. The reader may be ready to believe that mercy had dictated some slight solace for the miserable, in this arrangement. But this would be ascribing pity to a body, which, to its latest moment, had no tie to subject it to the weakness of humanity. So far from consulting the sufferings of the captive, his winter cell was below the level of the canals, while

his summers were to be past beneath the leads, exposed to the action of the burning sun of that climate. As the reader has probably anticipated, already, that Jacopo was in the prison on an errand connected with some captive, this short explanation will enable him to understand the secret allusion of his companion. He they sought had, in truth, been recently conveyed from the damp cells, where he had passed the winter and spring, to the heated chambers beneath the roof.

Gelsomina continued to lead the way, with a sadness of eye and feature, that betrayed her strong sympathy with the sufferings of her companion, but without appearing to think further delay necessary. She had communicated a circumstance, which weighed heavily on her own mind, and, like most of her mild temperament, who had dreaded such a duty, now that it was discharged, she experienced a sensible relief. They ascended many flights of steps, opened and shut numberless doors, and threaded several narrow corridors, in silence, before reaching the place of destination. While Gelsomina sought the key of the door, before which they stopped, in the large bunch she carried, the Bravo breathed the hot air of the attic, like one who was suffocating.

“They promised me that this should not be done again!” he said.—“But they forget their pledges, fiends, as they are!”

“Carlo!—thou forgettest that this is the palace of the doge!” whispered the girl, while she threw a timid glance behind her.

“I forget nothing that is connected with the republic!—It is all here,” striking his flushed brow—“what is not there, is in my heart!”

“Poor Carlo! this cannot last for ever—there will be an end.”

“Thou art right;” answered the Bravo, hoarsely.

—“The end is nearer than thou thinkest.—No matter; turn the key, that we may go in.”

The hand of Gelsomina lingered on the lock, but admonished by his impatient eye, she complied, and they entered the cell.

“Father!” exclaimed the Bravo, hastening to the side of a pallet, that lay on the floor.

The attenuated and feeble form of an old man rose at the word, and an eye which, while it spoke mental feebleness, was at that moment even brighter than that of his son, glared on the faces of Gelsomina and her companion.

“Thou hast not suffered, as I had feared, by this sudden change, father!” continued the latter, kneeling by the side of the straw.—“Thine eye, and cheek, and countenance are better, than in the damp caves below!”

“I am happy here,” returned the prisoner;—“there is light, and though they have given me too much of it, thou canst never know, my boy, the joy of looking at the day, after so long a night.”

“He is better, Gelsomina!—They have not yet destroyed him. See!—his eye is bright even, and his cheek has a glow!”

“They are ever so, after passing the winter in the lower dungeons;” whispered the gentle girl.

“Hast thou news for me, boy?—What tidings from thy mother?”

Jacopo bowed his head to conceal the anguish occasioned by this question, which he now heard for the hundredth time.

“She is happy, father—happy as one can be, who so well loves thee, when away from thy side.”

“Does she speak of me often?”

“The last word that I heard from her lips, was thy name.”

“Holy Maria, bless her! I trust she remembers me in her prayers?”

"Doubt it not, father,—they are the prayers of an angel!"

"And thy patient sister?—thou hast not named her, son."

"She, too, is well, father."

"Has she ceased to blame herself for being the innocent cause of my sufferings?"

"She has."

"Then she pines no longer over a blow that cannot be helped."

The Bravo seemed to search for relief in the sympathizing eye of the pale and speechless Gelsomina.

"She has ceased to pine, father;" he uttered with compelled calmness.

"Thou hast ever loved thy sister, boy, with manly tenderness. Thy heart is kind, as I have reason to know. If God has given me grief, he has blessed me, in my children!"

A long pause followed, during which the parent seemed to muse on the past, while the child rejoiced in the suspension of questions which harrowed his soul, since those of whom the other spoke had long been the victims of family misfortune. The old man, for the prisoner was aged, as well as feeble, turned his look on the still kneeling Bravo, thoughtfully, and continued.

"There is little hope of thy sister marrying, for none are fond of tying themselves to the proscribed."

"She wishes it not—she wishes it not—she is happy, with my mother!"

"It is a happiness the republic will not begrudge. Is there no hope of our being able to meet soon?"

"Thou wilt meet my mother,—yes, that pleasure will come at last!"

"It is a weary time since any of my blood, but thee, have stood in my sight. Kneel, that I may bless thee."

Jacopo, who had arisen under his mental torture, obeyed, and bowed his head in reverence to receive the paternal benediction. The lips of the old man moved, and his eyes were turned to Heaven, but his language was of the heart, rather than that of the tongue. Gelsomina bent her head to her bosom, and seemed to unite her prayers to those of the prisoner. When the silent but solemn ceremony was ended, each made the customary sign of the cross, and Jacopo kissed the wrinkled hand of the captive.

“Hast thou hope for me?” the old man asked, this pious and grateful duty done. “Do they still promise to let me look upon the sun, again?”

“They do.—They promise fair.”

“Would that their words were true! I have lived on hope, for a weary time—I have now been within these walls, more than four years, methinks.”

Jacopo did not answer, for he knew that his father named the period only that he himself had been permitted to see him.

“I built upon the expectation, that the doge would remember his ancient servant, and open my prison-doors.”

Still Jacopo was silent, for the doge, of whom the other spoke, had long been dead.

“And yet I should be grateful, for Maria and the saints have not forgotten me. I am not without my pleasures, in captivity.”

“God be praised!” returned the Bravo. “In what manner dost thou ease thy sorrows, father?”

“Look hither, boy,” exclaimed the old man, whose eye betrayed a mixture of feverish excitement, caused by the recent change in his prison, and the growing imbecility of a mind that was gradually losing its powers for want of use; “dost thou see the rent in that bit of wood? It opens with the heat, from time to time, and since I have been

an inhabitant here, that fissure has doubled in length —I sometimes fancy, that when it reaches the knot, the hearts of the senators will soften, and that my doors will open. There is a satisfaction, in watching its increase, as it lengthens, inch by inch, year after year!"

"Is this all?"

"Nay, I have other pleasures. There was a spider the past year, that wove his web from yonder beam, and he was a companion, too, that I loved to see; wilt thou look, boy, if there is hope of his coming back?"

"I see him not;" whispered the Bravo.

"Well, there is always the hope of its return. The flies will enter soon, and then he will be looking for his prey. They may shut me up on a false charge, and keep me weary years from my wife and daughter, but they cannot rob me of all my happiness!"

The aged captive was mute and thoughtful. A childish impatience glowed in his eye, and he gazed from the rent, the companion of so many solitary summers, to the face of his son, like one who began to distrust his enjoyments.

"Well, let them take it away," he said, burying his head beneath the covering of his bed; "I will not curse them!"

"Father!"

The prisoner made no reply.

"Father!"

"Jacopo!"

In his turn the Bravo was speechless. He did not venture, even, to steal a glance towards the breathless and attentive Gelsomina, though his bosom heaved with longing to examine her guileless features.

"Dost thou hear me, son?" continued the prisoner, uncovering his head: "dost thou really think

they will have the heart to chase the spider from my cell?"

"They will leave thee this pleasure, father, for it touches neither their power, nor their fame. So long as the senate can keep its foot on the neck of the people, and so long as it can keep the seemliness of a good name, it will not envy thee this."

"Blessed Maria, make me thankful!—I had my fears, child; for it is not pleasant to lose any friend in a cell!"

Jacopo then proceeded to soothe the mind of the prisoner, and he gradually led his thoughts to other subjects. He laid by the bed-side a few articles of food, that he was allowed to bring with him, and again holding out the hope of eventual liberation, he proposed to take his leave.

"I will try to believe thee, son," said the old man, who had good reason to distrust assurances so often made. "I will do all I can to believe it. Thou wilt tell thy mother, that I never cease to think of her, and to pray for her; and thou wilt bless thy sister, in the name of her poor imprisoned parent."

The Bravo bowed in acquiescence, glad of any means to escape speech. At a sign from the old man he again bent his knee, and received the parting benediction. After busying himself in arranging the scanty furniture of the cell, and in trying to open one or two small fissures, with a view to admit more light and air, he quitted the place.

Neither Gelsomina nor Jacopo spoke, as they returned by the intricate passages through which they had ascended to the attic, until they were again on the Bridge of Sighs. It was seldom that human foot trod this gallery, and the former, with female quickness, selected it as a place suited to their further conference.

“Dost thou find him changed?” she asked, lingering on the arch.

“Much.”

“Thou speakest with a frightful meaning!”

“I have not taught my countenance to lie to thee, Gelsomina.”

“But there is hope.—Thou told’st him there was hope, thyself.”

“Blessed Maria forgive the fraud! I could not rob the little life he has, of its only comfort.”

“Carlo!—Carlo!—Why art thou so calm? I have never heard thee speak so calmly of thy father’s wrongs and imprisonment.”

“It is because his liberation is near.”

“But this moment he was without hope, and thou speakest, now, of liberation!”

“The liberation of death. Even the anger of the senate will respect the grave.”

“Dost thou think his end near? I had not seen this change.”

“Thou art kind, good Gelsomina, and true to thy friends, and without suspicion of those crimes of which thou art so innocent; but to one, who has seen as much evil as I, a jealous thought comes at every new event: The sufferings of my poor father are near their end, for nature is worn out; but were it not, I can foresee that means would be found to bring them to a close.”

“Thou canst not suspect that any here would do him harm!”

“I suspect none that belong to thee. Both thy father and thyself, Gelsomina, are placed here by the interposition of the saints, that the fiends should not have too much power on earth.”

“I do not understand thee, Carlo—but thou art often so.—Thy father used a word to-day that I could wish he had not, in speaking to thee.”

The eye of the Bravo threw a quick, uneasy, sus-

picious glance at his companion, and then averted its look with haste.

“He called thee, Jacopo!” continued the girl.

“Men often have glimpses of their fate, by the kindness of their patrons.”

“Would’st thou say, Carlo, that thy father suspects the senate will employ the monster he named?”

“Why not?—they have employed worse men. If report says true, he is not unknown to them.”

“Can this be so!—Thou art bitter against the republic, because it has done injury to thy family; but thou canst not believe it has ever dealt with the hired stiletto.”

“I said no more than is whispered daily on the canals.”

“I would thy father had not called thee by this terrible name, Carlo!”

“Thou art too wise to be moved by a word, Gelsomina. But what thinkest thou of my unhappy father?”

“This visit has not been like the others thou hast made him in my company. I know not the reason, but to me thou hast ever seemed to feel the hope with which thou hast cheered the prisoner; while now, thou seemest to have even a frightful pleasure in despair.”

“Thy fears deceive thee;” returned the Bravo, scarce speaking above his breath. “Thy fears deceive thee, and we will say no more. The senate mean to do us justice, at last. They are honorable Signori, of illustrious birth, and renowned names!—Twould be madness to distrust the patricians! Dost thou not know, girl, that he who is born of gentle blood is above the weaknesses and temptations that beset us of base origin? They are men placed by birth above the weaknesses of mortals, and owing their account to none, they will be sure to do justice. This is reasonable, and who can doubt it!”

As he ended, the Bravo laughed bitterly.

"Nay, now thou triflest with me, Carlo; none are above the danger of doing wrong, but those whom the saints and kind Maria favor."

"This comes of living in a prison, and of saying thy prayers night and morning! No—no—silly girl, there are men in the world born wise, from generation to generation; born honest, virtuous, brave, incorruptible, and fit in all things to shut up and imprison those who are born base and ignoble. Where hast thou passed thy days, foolish Gelsomina, not to have felt this truth, in the very air thou breathest? 'Tis clear as the sun's light, and palpable—ay—palpable as these prison walls!"

The timid girl recoiled from his side, and there was a moment when she meditated flight; for never before, during their numberless and confidential interviews, had she ever heard so bitter a laugh, or seen so wild a gleam in the eye of her companion.

"I could almost fancy, Carlo, that thy father was right in using the name he did;" she said, as recovering herself, she turned a reproachful look on his still excited features.

"It is the business of parents to name their children;—but, enough. I must leave thee, good Gelsomina, and I leave thee with a heavy heart."

The unsuspecting Gelsomina forgot her alarm. She knew not why, but, though the imaginary Carlo seldom quitted her that she was not sad, she felt a weight heavier than common on her spirits at this declaration.

"Thou hast thy affairs, and they must not be forgotten. Art fortunate with the gondola, of late, Carlo?"

"Gold and I are nearly strangers. The republic throws the whole charge of the venerable prisoner on my toil."

"I have little, as thou knowest, Carlo," said Gel-

somina, in a half-audible voice; "but it is thine. My father is not rich, as thou canst feel, or he would not live on the sufferings of others, by holding the keys of the prison."

"He is better employed than those who set the duty. Were the choice given me, girl, to wear the horned bonnet, to feast in their halls, to rest in their palaces, to be the gayest bauble in such a pageant as that of yesterday, to plot in their secret councils, and to be the heartless judge to condemn my fellows to this misery—or to be merely the keeper of the keys and turner of the bolts—I should seize on the latter office, as not only the most innocent, but by far the most honorable!"

"Thou dost not judge as the world judges, Carlo. I had feared thou might'st feel shame at being the husband of a jailer's daughter; nay, I will not hide the secret longer, since thou speakest so calmly, I have wept that it should be so."

"Then thou hast neither understood the world nor me. Were thy father of the senate, or of the Council of Three, could the grievous fact be known, thou would'st have cause to sorrow. But Gelsomina, the canals are getting dusky, and I must leave thee."

The reluctant girl saw the truth of what he said, and applying a key, she opened the door of the covered bridge. A few turnings and a short descent brought the Bravo and his companion to the level of the quays. Here the former took a hurried leave and quitted the prison.

CHAPTER IV.

But they who blunder thus are raw beginners.

Don Juan.

THE hour had come for the revels of the Piazza, and for the movement of the gondolas. Maskers glided along the porticoes as usual ; the song and cry were heard anew, and Venice was again absorbed in delusive gaiety.

When Jacopo issued from the prison on the quay, he mingled with the stream of human beings that was setting towards the squares, protected from observation by the privileged mask. While crossing the lower bridge of the canal of St. Mark, he lingered an instant, to throw a look at the glazed gallery he had just quitted, and then moved forward with the crowd—the image of the artless and confiding Gelsomina uppermost in his thoughts. As he passed slowly along the gloomy arches of the Broglio, his eye sought the person of Don Camillo Monforte. They met at the angle of the little square, and exchanging secret signs, the Bravo moved on unnoticed.

Hundreds of boats lay at the foot of the Piazzetta. Among these Jacopo sought his own gondola, which he extricated from the floating mass, and urged into the stream. A few sweeps of the oar, and he lay at the side of La Bella Sorrentina. The padrone paced the deck, enjoying the cool of the evening, with Italian indolence, while his people sang, or rather chanted, a song of those seas, grouped on the forecastle. The greetings were blunt and brief, as is usual among men of that class. But the padrone appeared to expect the visit, for he led his guest far from the ears of his crew, to the other extremity of the felucca.

"Hast thou aught in particular, good Roderigo?" demanded the mariner, who knew the Bravo by a sign, and yet who only knew him by that fictitious name. "Thou seest we have not passed the time idly, though yesterday was a *festa*."

"Art thou ready for the gulf?"

"For the Levant, or the pillars of Hercules, as shall please the senate. We have got our yard aloft since the sun went behind the mountains, and though we may seem careless of delay, an hour's notice will fit us for the outside of the Lido."

"Then take the notice."

"Master Roderigo, you bring your news to an overstocked market. I have already been informed that we shall be wanted to-night."

The quick movement of suspicion made by the Bravo escaped the observation of the padrone, whose eye was running over the felucca's gear, with a sailor's habitual attention to that part of his vessel, when there was question of its service.

"Thou art right, Stefano. But there is little harm in repeated caution. Preparation is the first duty in a delicate commission."

"Will you look for yourself, Signor Roderigo?" said the mariner, in a lower tone. "La Bella Sorrentina is not the Bucentaur, nor a galley of the Grand Master of Malta; but, for her size, better rooms are not to be had in the palace of the doge. When they told me there was a lady in the freight, the honor of Calabria was stirred in her behalf."

"'Tis well. If they have named to thee all the particulars, thou wilt not fail to do thyself credit."

"I do not say that they have shown me half of them, good Signore;" interrupted Stefano. "The secrecy of your Venetian shipments is my greatest objection to the trade. It has more than once happened to me, that I have lain weeks in the canals, with my hold as clean as a friar's conscience, when

orders have come to weigh, with some such cargo as a messenger, who has got into his berth as we cleared the port, to get out of it on the coast of Dalmatia, or among the Greek islands."

"In such cases thou hast earned thy money easily."

"Diamine! Master Roderigo, if I had a friend in Venice to give timely advice, the felucca might be ballasted with articles that would bring a profit, on the other shore. Of what concern is it to the senate, when I do my duty to the nobles faithfully, that I do my duty at the same time to the good woman and her little brown children, left at home, in Calabria?"

"There is much reason in what thou sayest, Stefano; but thou knowest the republic is a hard master. An affair of this nature must be touched with a gentle hand."

"None know it better than I, for when they sent the trader with all his movables out of the city, I was obliged to throw certain casks into the sea, to make room for his worthless stuffs. The senate owes me just compensation for that loss, worthy Signor Roderigo!"

"Which thou would'st be glad to repair, to-night?"

"Santissima Maria! You may be the doge himself, Signore, for any thing I know of your countenance; but I could swear at the altar you ought to be of the senate for your sagacity!—If this lady will not be burthened with many effects, and there is yet time, I might humor the tastes of the Dalmatians with certain of the articles that come from the countries beyond the pillars of Hercules!"

"Thou art the judge of the probability thyself, since they told thee of the nature of thy errand."

"San Gennaro of Napoli, open my eyes!—They said not a word beyond this little fact, that a youthful lady, in whom the senate had great interest, would

quit the city this night for the eastern coast. If it is at all agreeable to your conscience, Master Roderigo, I should be happy to hear who are to be her companions?"

"Of that thou shalt hear more in proper season. In the meantime, I would recommend to thee a cautious tongue, for St. Mark makes no idle jokes with those who offend him. I am glad to see thee in this state of preparation, worthy padrone, and wishing thee a happy night, and a prosperous voyage, I commit thee to thy patron. But hold—ere I quit thee, I would know the hour that the land-breeze will serve?"

"You are exact as a compass in your own matters, Signore, but of little charity to thy friends! With the burning sun of to-day we should have the air of the Alps, about the turn of the night."

"'Tis well.—My eye shall be on thee. Once more, addio."

"Cospetto! and thou hast said nothing of the cargo?"

"'Twill not be so weighty in bulk as in value," carelessly answered Jacopo, shoving his gondola from the side of the felucca. The fall of his oar into the water succeeded, and as Stefano stood, meditating the chances of his speculation on his deck, the boat glided away towards the quay, with a swift but easy movement.

Deceit, like the windings of that subtle animal the fox, often crosses its own path. It consequently throws out those by whom it is practised, as well as those who are meant to be its victims. When Jacopo parted from Don Camillo, it was with an understanding that he should adopt all the means that his native sagacity, or his experience might suggest, to ascertain in what manner the council intended to dispose of the person of Donna Violetta. They had separated on the Lido, and as none knew of their

interview but him, and none would probably suspect their recent alliance, the Bravo entered on his new duty with some chances of success, that might otherwise have been lost. A change of its agents, in affairs of peculiar delicacy, was one of the ordinary means taken by the republic to avoid investigation. Jacopo had often been its instrument in negotiating with the mariner, who, as has been so plainly intimated, had frequently been engaged in carrying into effect its secret, and perhaps justifiable measures of police ; but in no instance had it ever been found necessary to interpose a second agent between the commencement and the consummation of its bargains, except in this. He had been ordered to see the padrone, and to keep him in preparation for immediate service ; but since the examination of Antonio before the council, his employers had neglected to give him any farther instructions. The danger of leaving the bride within reach of the agents of Don Camillo was so obvious, that this unusual caution had been considered necessary. It was under this disadvantage, therefore, that Jacopo entered on the discharge of his new and important duties.

That cunning, as has just been observed, is apt to overreach itself, has passed into a proverb ; and the case of Jacopo and his employers was one in point to prove its truth. The unusual silence of those who ordinarily sought him on similar occasions, had not been lost on the agent ; and the sight of the felucca, as he strayed along the quays, gave an accidental direction to his inquiries. The manner in which they were aided, by the cupidity of the Calabrian, has just been related.

Jacopo had no sooner touched the quay and secured his boat, than he hastened again to the Broglio. It was now filled by maskers and the idlers of the Piazzetta. The patricians had withdrawn to the scenes of their own pleasures, or, in furtherance

of that system of mysterious sway which it was their policy to maintain, they did not choose to remain exposed to the common eye, during the hours of license which were about to follow.

It would seem that Jacopo had his instructions, for no sooner did he make sure that Don Camillo had retired, than he threaded the throng with the air of a man whose course was decided. By this time, both the squares were full, and at least half of those who spent the night in those places of amusement, were masked. The step of the Bravo, though so unhesitating, was leisurely, and he found time, in passing up the Piazzetta, to examine the forms, and, when circumstances permitted, the features of all he met. He proceeded, in this manner, to the point of junction between the two squares, when his elbow was touched by a light hand.

Jacopo was not accustomed, unnecessarily, to trust his voice in the square of St. Mark, and at that hour. But his look of inquiry was returned by a sign to follow. He had been stopped by one, whose figure was so completely concealed by a domino, as to baffle all conjecture concerning his true character. Perceiving, however, that the other wished to lead him to a part of the square that was vacant, and which was directly on the course he was about to pursue, the Bravo made a gesture of compliance and followed. No sooner were the two apart from the pressure of the crowd, and in a place where no eaves-dropper could overhear their discourse without detection, than the stranger stopped. He appeared to examine the person, stature, and dress of Jacopo, from beneath his mask, with singular caution, closing the whole with a sign that meant recognition. Jacopo returned his dumb show, but maintained a rigid silence.

“Just Daniel!” muttered the stranger, when he found that his companion was not disposed to speak;

"one would think, illustrious Signore, that your confessor had imposed a penance of silence, by the manner in which you refuse to speak to your servant."

"What would'st thou?"

"Here am I, sent into the piazza, among knights of industry, valets, gondoliers, and all other manner of revellers that adorn this Christian land, in search of the heir of one of the most ancient and honorable houses of Venice."

"How knowest thou I am he thou seekest?"

"Signore, there are many signs seen by a wise man, that escape the unobservant. When young cavaliers have a taste for mingling with the people in honorable disguise, as in the case of a certain patrician of this republic, they are to be known by their air, if not by their voices."

"Thou art a cunning agent, Hosea; but the shrewdness of thy race is its livelihood!"

"It is its sole defence against the wrongs of the oppressor, young noble. We are hunted like wolves, and it is not surprising that we sometimes show the ferocity of the beasts you take us for. But why should I tell the wrongs of my people to one who believes life is a masquerade!"

"And who would not be sorry, ingenious Hosea, were it composed only of Hebrews! But, thy errand; I have no gage unredeemed, nor do I know that I owe thee gold."

"Righteous Samuel! you cavaliers of the senate are not always mindful of the past, Signore, or these are words that might have been spared. If your excellency is inclined to forget pledges, the fault is not of my seeking; but as for the account that has been so long growing between us, there is not a dealer on the Rialto that will dispute the proofs."

"Well, be it so—would'st thou dun my father's son in the face of the revellers in St. Mark?"

"I would do no discredit to any come of that illustrious race, Signore, and therefore we will say no more of the matter; always relying that, at the proper moment, you will not question your own hand and seal."

"I like thy prudence, Hebrew. It is a pledge thou comest on some errand less ungracious than common. As I am pressed for time, 'twill be a favor wert thou to name it."

Hosea examined, in a covert but very thorough manner, the vacant spot around them, and drawing nearer to the supposed noble, he continued.

"Signore, your family is in danger of meeting with a great loss! It is known to you that the senate has altogether and suddenly removed Donna Violetta, from the keeping of the faithful and illustrious senator your father."

Though Jacopo started slightly, the movement was so natural for a disappointed lover, that it rather aided than endangered his disguise.

"Compose yourself, young Signore," continued Hosea; "these disappointments attend us all in youth, as I know by severe trials. Leah was not gained without trouble, and next to success in barter, success in love is perhaps the most uncertain. Gold is a great make-weight in both, and it commonly prevails. But, you are nearer to losing the lady of your love and her possessions, than you may imagine, for I am sent expressly to say, that she is about to be removed from the city."

"Whither?" demanded Jacopo, so quickly as to do credit to his assumed character.

"That is the point to learn, Signore. Thy father is a sagacious senator, and is deep, at times, in the secrets of the state. But, judging from his uncertainty on this occasion, I take it he is guided more

by his calculations, than by any assurance of his own knowledge. Just Daniel! I have seen the moments when I have suspected that the venerable patrician himself was a member of the Council of Three!"

"His house is ancient and his privileges well established—why should he not?"

"I say naught against it, Signore. It is a wise body, that doeth much good, and preventeth much harm. None speak evil of the secret councils on the Rialto, where men are more given to gainful industry than to wild discussions of their rulers' acts. But, Signore, be he of this or that council, or merely of the senate, a heedful hint has fallen from his lips, of the danger we are in of losing—"

"We!—Hast thou thoughts of Donna Violetta, Hosea?"

"Leah, and the law forbid!—If the comely queen of Sheba, herself, were to tempt me, and a frail nature showed signs of weakness, I doubt that our rabbis would find reasons for teaching self-denial! Besides, the daughter of Levi is no favorer of polygamy, nor any other of our sex's privileges. I spoke in pluralities, Signore, because the Rialto has some stake in this marriage, as well as the house of Gradenigo."

"I understand thee. Thou hast fears for thy gold?"

"Had I been easily alarmed, Signor Giacomo, in that particular, I might not have parted with it so readily. But, though the succession of thy illustrious father will be ample to meet any loan within my humble means, that of the late Signor Tiepolo will not weaken the security."

"I admit thy sagacity, and feel the importance of thy warning. But it seems to have no other object, or warranty, than thy own fears."

"With certain obscure hints from your honored father, Signore."

"Did he say more to the point?"

"He spoke in parables, young noble, but having an oriental ear, his words were not uttered to the wind. That the rich damsel is about to be conveyed from Venice am I certain, and for the benefit of the little stake I have myself in her movements, I would give the best turquoise in my shop to know whither."

"Canst thou say with certainty, 'twill be this night."

"Giving no pledge for redemption in the event of mistake, I am so sure, young cavalier, as to have many unquiet thoughts."

"Enough—I will look to my own interests, and to thine."

Jacopo waved his hand in adieu, and pursued his walk up the piazza.

"Had I looked more sharply to the latter, as became one accustomed to deal with the accursed race," muttered the Hebrew, "it would be a matter of no concern to me if the girl married a Turk!"

"Hosea," said a mask at his ear; "a word with thee, in secret."

The jeweller started, and found that, in his zeal, he had suffered one to approach within sound of his voice unseen. The other was in a domino also, and so well enveloped as to be effectually concealed.

"What would'st thou, Signor Mask?" demanded the wary Jew.

"A word in friendship and in confidence.—Thou hast moneys to lend at usury?"

"The question had better be put to the republic's treasury! I have many stones, valued much below their weight, and would be glad to put them, with some one more lucky than myself, who will be able to keep them."

“Nay, this will not suffice—thou art known to be abounding in sequins; one of thy race and riches will never refuse a sure loan, with securities as certain as the laws of Venice. A thousand ducats in thy willing hand is no novelty.”

“They who call me rich, Signor Mask, are pleased to joke with the unhappy child of a luckless race. That I might have been above want—nay, that I am not downright needy, may be true; but when they speak of a thousand ducats, they speak of affairs too weighty for my burthened shoulders. Were it your pleasure to purchase an amethyst, or a ruby, gallant Signore, there might possibly be dealings between us?”

“I have need of gold, old man, and can spare thee jewels myself, at need. My wants are urgent, at this moment, and I have little time to lose in words—name thy conditions.”

“One should have good securities, Signore, to be so peremptory in a matter of money.”

“Thou hast heard that the laws of Venice are not more certain. A thousand sequins, and that quickly. Thou shalt settle the usury with thine own conscience.”

Hosea thought that this was giving ample room to the treaty, and he began to listen more seriously.

“Signore,” he said, “a thousand ducats are not picked up at pleasure, from the pavement of the great square. He who would lend them, must first earn them with long and patient toil; and he who would borrow——”

“Waits at thy elbow.”

“Should have a name and countenance well known on the Rialto.”

“Thou lendest on sufficient pledges to masks, careful Hosea, or fame belies thy generosity.”

“A sufficient pledge gives me power to see the way clearly, though the borrower should be as

much hidden as those up above. But here is none forthcoming. Come to me to-morrow, masked or not, as may suit your own pleasure, for I have no impertinent desire to pry into any man's secrets, beyond what a regard to my own interests requires, and I will look into my coffers; though those of no heir-apparent in Venice can be emptier."

"My necessities are too urgent to brook delay. Hast thou the gold, on condition of naming thine own usury?"

"With sufficient pledges in stones of price, I might rake together the sum, among our dispersed people, Signore. But he who goes on the island to borrow, as I shall be obliged to do, should be able to satisfy all doubts concerning the payment."

"The gold can then be had—on that point I may be easy?"

Hosea hesitated, for he had in vain endeavored to penetrate the other's disguise, and while he thought his assurance a favorable omen, with a lender's instinct he disliked his impatience.

"I have said, by the friendly aid of our people;" he answered, with caution.

"This uncertainty will not answer my need. Adio, Hosea,—I must seek elsewhere."

"Signore, you could not be more hurried were the money to pay the cost of your nuptials. Could I find Isaac and Aaron within, at this late hour, I think I might be safe in saying, that part of the money might be had."

"I cannot trust to this chance."

"Nay, Signore, the chance is but small, since Aaron is bed-ridden, and Isaac never fails to look into his affairs, after the toil of the day is ended. The honest Hebrew finds sufficient recreation in the employment, though I marvel at his satisfaction, since nothing but losses have come over our people the year past!"

"I tell thee, Jew, no doubt must hang over the negotiation. The money, with pledges, and thine own conscience for arbiter between us; but no equivocal dealings, to be followed by a disappointment, under the pretence that second parties are not satisfied."

"Just Daniel! to oblige you, Signore, I think I may venture!—The well-known Hebrew, Levi of Livorno, has left with me a sack, containing the very sum of which there is question, and, under the conditions named, I will convert it to my uses, and repay the good jeweller his gold, with moneys of my own, at a later day."

"I thank thee for the fact, Hosea;" said the other, partially removing his mask, but as instantly replacing it. "It will greatly shorten our negotiations. Thou hast not that sack of the Jew of Livorno beneath thy domino?"

Hosea was speechless. The removal of the mask had taught him two material facts. He had been communicating his distrust of the Senate's intentions, concerning Donna Violetta, to an unknown person, and, possibly, to an agent of the police; and he had just deprived himself of the only argument he had ever found available, in refusing the attempts of Giacomo Gradenigo to borrow, by admitting to that very individual, that he had in his power the precise sum required.

"I trust the face of an old customer is not likely to defeat our bargain, Hosea?" demanded the profigate heir of the senator, scarce concealing the irony in which the question was put.

"Father Abraham! Had I known it had been you, Signor Giacomo, we might have greatly shortened the treaty."

"By denying that thou hadst the money, as thou hast so often done of late!"

“ Nay, nay, I am not a swallower of my own words, young Signore ; but my duty to Levi must not be forgotten. The careful Hebrew made me take a vow, by the name of our tribe, that I would not part with his gold, to any that had not the means of placing its return beyond all chances.”

“ This assurance is not wanting, since thou art the borrower, thyself, to lend to me.”

“ Signore, you place my conscience in an awkward position. You are now my debtor some six-thousand sequins, and were I to make this loan of money in trust, and were you to return it—two propositions I make on supposition—a natural love for my own might cause me to pass the payment to account, whereby I should put the assets of Levi in jeopardy.”

“ Settle that as thou wilt with thy conscience, Hosea—thou hast confessed to the money, and here are jewels for the pledge—I ask only the sequins.”

It is probable that the appeal of Giacomo Gradenigo would not have produced much effect on the flinty nature of the Hebrew, who had all the failings of a man proscribed by opinion ; but having recovered from his surprise, he began to explain to his companion his apprehensions on account of Donna Violetta, whose marriage, it will be remembered, was a secret to all but the witnesses and the Council of Three, when to his great joy he found that the gold was wanting to advance his own design of removing her to some secret place. This immediately changed the whole face of the bargain. As the pledges offered were really worth the sum to be received, Hosea thought, taking the chances of recovering back his ancient loans, from the foreign estates of the heiress, into the account, the loan would be no bad investment of the pretended sequins of his friend Levi.

As soon as the parties had come to a clear understanding, they left the square together, to consummate their bargain.

CHAPTER V.

“We'll follow Cade, we'll follow Cade.”

Henry VI.

THE night wore on. The strains of music again began to break through the ordinary stillness of the town, and the boats of the great were once more in motion on every canal. Hands waved timidly in recognition, from the windows of the little dark canopies, as the gondolas glided by, but few paused to greet each other in that city of mystery and suspicion. Even the refreshing air of the evening was inhaled under an appearance of restraint, which, though it might not be at the moment felt, was too much interwoven with the habits of the people, ever to be entirely thrown aside.

Among the lighter and gayer barges of the patricians, a gondola of more than usual size, but of an exterior so plain as to denote vulgar uses, came sweeping down the great canal. Its movement was leisurely, and the action of the gondoliers that of men either fatigued or little pressed for time. He who steered, guided the boat with consummate skill, but with a single hand, while his three fellows, from time to time, suffered their oars to trail on the water in very idleness. In short, it had the ordinary listless appearance of a boat returning to the city, from an excursion on the Brenta, or to some of the more distant isles.

Suddenly, the gondola diverged from the centre

of the passage, down which it rather floated than pulled, and shot into one of the least frequented canals of the city. From this moment its movement became more rapid and regular, until it reached a quarter of the town inhabited by the lowest order of the Venetians. Here it stopped by the side of a warehouse, and one of its crew ascended to a bridge. The others threw themselves on the thwarts and seemed to repose.

He who quitted the boat threaded a few narrow but public allies, such as are to be found in every part of that confined town, and knocked lightly at a window. It was not long before the casement opened, and a female voice demanded the name of him without.

"It is I, Annina;" returned Gino, who was not an unfrequent applicant for admission, at that private portal. "Open the door, girl, for I have come on a matter of pressing haste."

Annina complied, though not without making sure that her suitor was alone.

"Thou art come unseasonably, Gino," said the wine-seller's daughter; "I was about to go to St. Mark's to breathe the evening air. My father and brothers are already departed, and I only stay to make sure of the bolts."

"Their gondola will hold a fourth?"

"They have gone by the footways."

"And thou walkest the streets alone at this hour, Annina?"

"I know not thy right to question it, if I do," returned the girl, with spirit. "San Teodoro be praised, I am not yet the slave of a Neapolitan's servitor!"

"The Neapolitan is a powerful noble, Annina, able and willing to keep his servitors in respect."

"He will have need of all his interest—but why hast thou come at this unseasonable hour? Thy

visits are never too welcome, Gino, and when I have other affairs, they are disagreeable."

- Had the passion of the gondolier been very deep or very sensitive, this plain dealing might have given him a shock ; but Gino appeared to take the repulse as coolly as it was given.

"I am used to thy caprices, Annina," he said, throwing himself upon a bench, like one determined to remain where he was. "Some young patrician has kissed his hand to thee as thou hast crossed San Marco, or thy father has made a better day of it than common on the Lido—thy pride always mounts with thy father's purse."

"Diamine ! to hear the fellow, one would think he had my troth, and that he only waited in the sacristy for the candles to be lighted, to receive my vows ! What art thou to me, Gino Tullini, that thou takest on thee these sudden airs ?"

"And what art thou to me, Annina, that thou playest off these worn-out caprices on Don Camillo's confidant ?"

"Out upon thee, insolent ! I have no time to waste in idleness."

"Thou art in much haste to-night, Annina."

"To be rid of thee. Now listen to what I say, Gino, and let every word go to thy heart, for they are the last thou wilt ever hear from me. Thou servest a decayed noble, one who will shortly be chased in disgrace from the city, and with him will go all his idle servitors. I choose to remain in the city of my birth."

The gondolier laughed in real indifference at her affected scorn. But remembering his errand, he quickly assumed a graver air, and endeavored to still the resentment of his fickle mistress, by a more respectful manner.

"St. Mark protect me, Annina !" he said, "If we are not to kneel before the good priore together, it

is no reason we should not bargain in wines. Here have I come into the dark canals, within stone's-throw of thy very door, with a gondola of mellow *Lachryma Christi*, such as honest 'Maso, thy father, has rarely dealt in, and thou treatest me as a dog, that is chased from a church!"

"I have little time for thee, or thy wines, to-night, Gino. Hadst thou not stayed me, I should already have been abroad and happy."

"Close thy door, girl, and make little ceremony with an old friend," said the gondolier, officially offering to aid her in securing the dwelling. Annina took him at his word, and as both appeared to work with good will, the house was locked, and the wilful girl and her suitor were soon in the street. Their route lay across the bridge already named. Gino pointed to the gondola, as he said, "Thou art not to be tempted, Annina?"

"Thy rashness in leading the smugglers to my father's door will bring us to harm some day, silly fellow!"

"The boldness of the act will prevent suspicion."

"Of what vineyard is the liquor?"

"It came from the foot of Vesuvius, and is ripened by the heat of the volcano. Should my friends part with it to thy enemy, old Beppo, thy father will rue the hour!"

Annina, who was much addicted to consulting her interests on all occasions, cast a longing glance at the boat. The canopy was closed, but it was large, and her willing imagination readily induced her to fancy it well filled with skins from Naples.

"This will be the last of thy visits to our door, Gino?"

"As thou shalt please.—But go down and taste—"

Annina hesitated, and, as a woman is said always to do when she hesitates, she complied. They reached the boat, with quick steps, and without regarding

the men who were still lounging on the thwarts, Annina glided immediately beneath the canopy. A fifth gondolier was lying at length on the cushions, for, unlike a boat devoted to the contraband, the canopy had the usual arrangement of a bark of the canals.

"I see nothing to turn me aside!" exclaimed the disappointed girl. "Wilt thou aught with me, Signore?"

"Thou art welcome. We shall not part so readily as before."

The stranger had arisen while speaking, and as he ended, he laid a hand on the shoulder of his visitor, who found herself confronted with Don Camillo Monforte.

Annina was too much practised in deception to indulge in any of the ordinary female symptoms, either of real or of affected alarm. Commanding her features, though in truth her limbs shook, she said, with assumed pleasantry—

"The secret trade is honored in the services of the noble Duke of St. Agata!"

"I am not here to trifle, girl, as thou wilt see in the end. Thou hast thy choice before thee, frank confession, or my just anger."

Don Camillo spoke calmly, but in a manner that plainly showed Annina she had to deal with a resolute man.

"What confession would your eccellenza have from the daughter of a poor wine-seller?" she asked, her voice trembling in spite of herself.

"The truth—and remember, that this time we do not part until I am satisfied. The Venetian police and I are now fairly at issue, and thou art the first fruits of my plan."

"Signor Duca, this is a bold step to take in the heart of the canals!"

"The consequences be mine. Thy interest will teach thee to confess."

"I shall make no great merit, Signore, of doing that which is forced upon me. As it is your pleasure to know the little I can tell you, I am happy to be permitted to relate it."

"Speak, then; for time presses."

"Signore, I shall not pretend to deny you have been ill-treated. Capperi! how ill has the council treated you! A noble cavalier, of a strange country, who, the meanest gossip in Venice knows, has a just right to the honors of the senate, to be so treated is a disgrace to the republic! I do not wonder that your eccellenza is out of humor with them. Blessed St. Mark himself would lose his patience to be thus treated!"

"A truce with this, girl, and to your facts."

"My facts, Signor Duca, are a thousand times clearer than the sun, and they are all at your eccellenza's service. I am sure I wish I had more of them, since they give you pleasure."

"Enough of this profession.—Speak to the facts themselves."

Annina, who, in the manner of most of her class in Italy, that had been exposed to the intrigues of the towns, had been lavish of her words, now found means to cast a glance at the water, when she saw that the boat had already quitted the canals, and was rowing easily out upon the Lagunes. Perceiving how completely she was in the power of Don Camillo, she began to feel the necessity of being more explicit.

"Your eccellenza has probably suspected that the council found means to be acquainted with your intention to fly from the city with Donna Violetta?"

"All that is known to me."

"Why they chose me to be the servitor of the noble lady is beyond my powers to discover. Our Lady of Loretto! I am not the person to be sent for, when the state wishes to part two lovers!"

“ I have borne with thee, Annina, because I would let the gondola get beyond the limits of the city ; but now thou must throw aside thy subterfuge, and speak plainly. Where didst thou leave my wife ? ”

“ Does your eccellenza then think the state will admit the marriage to be legal ? ”

“ Girl, answer, or I will find means to make thee. Where didst thou leave my wife ? ”

“ Blessed St. Theodore ! Signore, the agents of the republic had little need of me, and I was put on the first bridge that the gondola passed.”

“ Thou strivest to deceive me in vain. Thou wast on the Lagunes till a late hour in the day, and I have notice of thy having visited the prison of St. Mark as the sun was setting ; and this on thy return from the boat of Donna Violetta.”

There was no acting in the wonder of Annina.

“ Santissima Maria ! You are better served, Signore, than the council thinks ! ”

“ As thou wilt find to thy cost, unless the truth be spoken. From what convent didst thou come ? ”

“ Signore, from none. If your eccellenza has discovered that the senate has shut up the Signora Tiepolo, in the prison of St. Mark, for safe-keeping, it is no fault of mine.”

“ Thy artifice is useless, Annina ; ” observed Don Camillo, calmly. “ Thou wast in the prison, in quest of forbidden articles that thou hadst long left with thy cousin Gelsomina, the keeper’s daughter, who little suspected thy errand, and on whose innocence and ignorance of the world thou hast long successfully practised. Donna Violetta is no vulgar prisoner, to be immured in a jail.”

“ Santissima Madre di Dio ! ”

Amazement confined the answer of the girl to this single, but strong, exclamation.

“ Thou seest the impossibility of deception. I am acquainted with so much of thy movements as to

render it impossible that thou should'st lead me far astray. Thou art not wont to visit thy cousin; but as thou entered the canals this evening——”

A shout on the water caused Don Camillo to pause. On looking out he saw a dense body of boats, sweeping towards the town as if they were all impelled by a single set of oars. A thousand voices were speaking at once, and occasionally a general and doleful cry proclaimed that the floating multitude, which came on, was moved by a common feeling. The singularity of the spectacle, and the fact that his own gondola lay directly in the route of the fleet, which was composed of several hundred boats, drove the examination of the girl, momentarily, from the thoughts of the noble.

“What have we here, Jacopo?” he demanded, in an under-tone, of the gondolier who steered his own barge.

“They are fishermen, Signore, and by the manner in which they come down towards the canals, I doubt they are bent on some disturbance. There has been discontent among them since the refusal of the doge to liberate the boy of their companion from the galleys.”

Curiosity induced the people of Don Camillo to linger a minute, and then they perceived the necessity of pulling out of the course of the floating mass, which came on like a torrent, the men sweeping their boats with that desperate stroke which is so often seen among the Italian oarsmen. A menacing hail, with a command to remain, admonished Don Camillo of the necessity of downright flight, or of obedience. He chose the latter, as the least likely to interfere with his own plans.

“Who art thou?” demanded one, who had assumed the character of a leader. “If men of the Lagunes and Christians, join your friends, and away with us to St. Mark, for justice!”

"What means this tumult?" asked Don Camillo, whose dress effectually concealed his rank, a disguise that he completed by adopting the Venetian dialect. "Why are you here in these numbers, friends?"

"Behold!"

Don Camillo turned, and he beheld the withered features and glaring eyes of old Antonio, fixed in death. The explanation was made by a hundred voices, accompanied by oaths so bitter, and denunciations so deep, that had not Don Camillo been prepared by the tale of Jacopo, he would have found great difficulty in understanding what he heard.

In dragging the Lagunes for fish, the body of Antonio had been found, and the result was, first a consultation on the probable means of his death, then a collection of the men of his calling, and finally the scene described.

"Giustizia!" exclaimed fifty excited voices, as the grim visage of the fisherman was held towards the light of the moon; "Giustizia in Palazzo e pane in Piazza!"

"Ask it of the senate!" returned Jacopo, not attempting to conceal the derision of his tones.

"Thinkest thou our fellow has suffered for his boldness yesterday?"

"Stranger things have happened in Venice!"

"They forbid us to cast our nets in the Canale Orfano, lest the secrets of justice should be known, and yet they have grown bold enough to drown one of our own people in the midst of our gondolas!"

"Justice, justice!" shouted numberless hoarse throats.

"Away to St. Mark's! Lay the body at the feet of the doge—away, brethren—Antonio's blood is on their souls!"

Bent on a wild and undigested scheme of asserting their wrongs, the fishermen again plied their

oars, and the whole fleet swept away, as if it were composed of a single mass.

The meeting, though so short, was accompanied by cries, menaces, and all those accustomed signs of rage which mark a popular tumult among those excitable people, and it had produced a sensible effect on the nerves of Annina. Don Camillo profited by her evident terror to press his questions, for the hour no longer admitted of trifling.

The result was, that while the agitated mob swept into the mouth of the Great Canal, raising hoarse shouts, the gondola of Don Camillo Monforte glided away across the wide and tranquil surface of the Lagunes.

CHAPTER VI.

“A Clifford, a Clifford! we'll follow the king and Clifford.”

Henry VI.

THE tranquillity of the best ordered society may be disturbed, at any time, by a sudden outbreaking of the malcontents. Against such a disaster there is no more guarding than against the commission of more vulgar crimes; but when a government trembles for its existence, before the turbulence of popular commotion, it is reasonable to infer some radical defect in its organization. Men will rally around their institutions, as freely as they rally around any other cherished interest, when they merit their care, and there can be no surer sign of their hollowness than when the rulers seriously apprehend the breath of the mob. No nation ever exhibited more of this symptomatic terror, on all

occasions of internal disturbance, than the pretending republic of Venice. There was a never-ceasing and a natural tendency to dissolution, in her factious system, which was only resisted by the alertness of her aristocracy, and the political buttresses which their ingenuity had reared. Much was said of the venerable character of her polity, and of its consequent security, but it is in vain that selfishness contends with truth. Of all the fallacies with which man has attempted to gloss his expedients, there is none more evidently false than that which infers the duration of a social system, from the length of time it has already lasted. It would be quite as reasonable to affirm that the man of seventy has the same chances for life as the youth of fifteen, or that the inevitable fate of all things of mortal origin was not destruction. There is a period in human existence, when the principle of vitality has to contend with the feebleness of infancy, but this probationary state passed, the child attains the age when it has the most reasonable prospect of living. Thus the social, like any other, machine, which has run just long enough to prove its fitness, is at the precise period when it is least likely to fail, and although he that is young may not live to become old, it is certain that he who is old was once young. The empire of China was, in its time, as youthful as our own republic, nor can we see any reason for believing that it is to outlast us, from the decrepitude which is a natural companion of its years.

At the period of our tale, Venice boasted much of her antiquity, and dreaded, in an equal degree, her end. She was still strong in her combinations, but they were combinations that had the vicious error of being formed for the benefit of the minority, and which, like the mimic fortresses and moats of a scenic representation, needed only a strong light to destroy the illusion. The alarm with

which the patricians heard the shouts of the fishermen, as they swept by the different palaces, on their way to the great square, can be readily imagined. Some feared that the final consummation of their artificial condition, which had so long been anticipated by a secret political instinct, was at length arrived, and began to bethink them of the safest means of providing for their own security. Some listened in admiration, for habit had so far mastered dullness, as to have created a species of identity between the state and far more durable things, and they believed that St. Mark had gained a victory, in that decline, which was never exactly intelligible to their apathetic capacities. But a few, and these were the spirits that accumulated all the national good which was vulgarly and falsely ascribed to the system itself, intuitively comprehended the danger, with a just appreciation of its magnitude, as well as of the means to avoid it.

But the rioters were unequal to any estimate of their own force, and had little aptitude in measuring their accidental advantages. They acted merely on impulse. The manner in which their aged companion had triumphed on the preceding day, his cold repulse by the doge, and the scene of the Lido, which in truth led to the death of Antonio, had prepared their minds for the tumult. When the body was found, therefore, after the time necessary to collect their forces on the Lagunes, they yielded to passion, and moved away towards the palace of St. Mark, as described, without any other definite object than a simple indulgence of feeling.

On entering the canal, the narrowness of the passage compressed the boats into a mass so dense, as, in a measure, to impede the use of oars, and the progress of the crowd was necessarily slow. All were anxious to get as near as possible to the body of Antonio, and, like all mobs, they in some degree

frustrated their own objects, by ill-regulated zeal. Once or twice the names of offensive senators were shouted, as if the fishermen intended to visit the crimes of the state on its agents; but these cries passed away in the violent breath that was expended. On reaching the bridge of the Rialto, more than half of the multitude landed, and took the shorter course of the streets to the point of destination, while those in front got on the faster, for being disengaged of the pressure in the rear. As they drew nearer to the port, the boats began to loosen, and to take something of the form of a funeral procession.

It was during this moment of change that a powerfully manned gondola swept, with strong strokes, out of a lateral passage into the Great Canal. Accident brought it directly in front of the moving phalanx of boats, that was coming down the same channel. Its crew seemed staggered by the extraordinary appearance, which met their view, and for an instant its course was undecided.

“A gondola of the republic!” shouted fifty fishermen. A single voice added—“Canale Orfano!”

The bare suspicion of such an errand, as was implied by the latter words, and at that moment, was sufficient to excite the mob. They raised a cry of denunciation, and some twenty boats made a furious demonstration of pursuit. The menace, however, was sufficient; for quicker far than the movements of the pursuers, the gondoliers of the republic dashed towards the shore, and leaping on one of those passages of planks, which encircle so many of the palaces of Venice, they disappeared by an alley.

Encouraged by this success, the fishermen seized the boat as a waif, and towed it into their own fleet, filling the air with cries of triumph. Curiosity led

a few to enter the hearse-like canopy, whence they immediately reissued, dragging forth a priest.

“Who art thou?” hoarsely demanded he, who took upon himself the authority of a leader.

“A Carmelite, and a servant of God!”

“Dost thou serve St. Mark? Hast thou been to the Canale Orfano, to shrive a wretch?”

“I am here, in attendance on a young and noble lady, who has need of my council and prayers. The happy and the miserable, the free and the captive, are equally my care!”

“Ha!—Thou art not above thy office?—Thou wilt say the prayers for the dead, in behalf of a poor man’s soul?”

“My son, I know no difference, in this respect, between the doge and the poorest fisherman. Still I would not willingly desert the females.”

“The ladies shall receive no harm. Come into my boat, for there is need of thy holy office.”

Father Anselmo—the reader will readily anticipate that it was he—entered the canopy, said a few words in explanation, to his trembling companions, and complied. He was rowed to the leading gondola, and, by a sign, directed to the dead body.

“Thou see’st that corpse, father?” continued his conductor. “It is the face of one who was an upright and pious Christian!”

“He was.”

“We all knew him as the oldest and the most skilful fisherman of the Lagunes, and one ever ready to assist an unlucky companion.”

“I can believe thee!”

“Thou mayest, for the holy books are not more true than my words—yesterday he came down this very canal, in triumph, for he bore away the honors of the regatta from the stoutest oars in Venice.”

"I have heard of his success."

"They say that Jacopo, the Bravo—he who once held the best oar in the canals—was of the party! Santa Madonna! such a man was too precious to die!"

"It is the fate of all—rich and poor, strong and feeble, happy and miserable, must alike come to this end."

"Not to this end, reverend Carmelite, for Antonio having given offence to the republic, in the matter of a grandson that is pressed for the galleys, has been sent to purgatory without a Christian hope for his soul."

There is an eye that watcheth on the meanest of us, son; we will believe he was not forgotten."

"Cospetto!—They say that those the senate look black upon, get but little aid from the church! Wilt thou pray for him, Carmelite, and make good thy words?"

"I will," said Father Anselmo, firmly. "Make room, son, that no decency of my duty be overlooked."

The swarthy, expressive, faces of the fishermen gleamed with satisfaction, for in the midst of the rude turmoil, they all retained a deep and rooted respect for the offices of the church in which they had been educated. Silence was quickly obtained, and the boats moved on with greater order than before.

The spectacle was now striking—In front rowed the gondola which contained the remains of the dead. The widening of the canal, as it approached the port, permitted the rays of the moon to fall upon the rigid features of old Antonio, which were set in such a look, as might be supposed to characterize the dying thoughts of a man so suddenly and so fearfully destroyed. The Carmelite, bare-headed, with clasped hands, and a devout heart, bowed his

head at the feet of the body, with his white robes flowing in the light of the moon. A single gondolier guided the boat, and no other noise was audible but the splash of the water, as the oars slowly fell and rose together. This silent procession lasted a few minutes, and then the tremulous voice of the monk was heard chanting the prayers for the dead. The practised fishermen, for few in that disciplined church, and that obedient age, were ignorant of those solemn rites, took up the responses, in a manner that must be familiar to every ear that has ever listened to the sounds of Italy, the gentle washing of the element, on which they glided, forming a soft accompaniment. Casement after casement opened while they passed, and a thousand curious and anxious faces crowded the balconies, as the funeral cortège swept slowly on.

The gondola of the republic was towed in the centre of the moving mass, by fifty lighter boats, for the fishermen still clung to their prize. In this manner the solemn procession entered the port, and touched the quay at the foot of the Piazzetta. While numberless eager hands were aiding in bringing the body of Antonio to land, there arose a shout from the centre of the ducal palace, which proclaimed the presence already of the other part of their body in its court.

The squares of St. Mark now presented a novel picture. The quaint and oriental church, the rows of massive and rich architecture, the giddy pile of the Campanile, the columns of granite, the masts of triumph, and all those peculiar and remarkable fixtures, which had witnessed so many scenes of violence, of rejoicing, of mourning, and of gaiety, were there, like land-marks of the earth, defying time; beautiful and venerable in despite of all those varying exhibitions of human passions, that were daily acted around them.

But the song, the laugh, and the jest, had ceased. The lights of the coffee-houses had disappeared, the revellers had fled to their homes, fearful of being confounded with those who braved the anger of the senate, while the grotesque, the ballad-singers, and the buffoon, had abandoned their assumed gaiety for an appearance more in unison with the true feelings of their hearts.

“Giustizia!—” cried a thousand deep voices, as the body of Antonio was borne into the court—“Illustrious Doge! Giustizia in palazzo, e pane in piazza! Give us justice! We are beggars for justice!”

The gloomy but vast court was paved with the swarthy faces and glittering eyes of the fishermen. The corpse was laid at the foot of the Giant’s Stairs, while the trembling halberdier at the head of the flight, scarce commanded himself sufficiently to maintain that air of firmness, which was exacted by discipline and professional pride. But there was no other show of military force, for the politic power, which ruled in Venice, knew too well its momentary impotency to irritate when it could not quell. The mob beneath was composed of nameless rioters, whose punishment could carry no other consequences than the suppression of immediate danger, and for that, those who ruled were not prepared.

The Council of Three had been apprized of the arrival of the excited fishermen. When the mob entered the court, it was consulting in secret conclave, on the probabilities of the tumult having a graver and more determined object, than was apparent in the visible symptoms. The routine of office had not yet dispossessed the men already presented to the reader, of their dangerous and despotic power.

“Are the Dalmatians apprized of this movement?” asked one of the secret tribunal, whose nerves were

scarcely equal to the high functions he discharged. "We may have occasion for their volleys, ere this riot is appeased."

"Confide in the ordinary authorities for that, Signore," answered the Senator Gradenigo. "I have only concern, lest some conspiracy, which may touch the fidelity of the troops, lies concealed beneath the outcry."

"The evil passions of man know no limits! What would the wretches have? For a state in the decline, Venice is to the last degree prosperous. Our ships are thriving; the bank flourishes with goodly dividends; and I do assure you, Signore, that, for many years, I have not known so ample revenues for most of our interests, as at this hour. All cannot thrive alike!"

"You are happily connected with flourishing affairs, Signore, but there are many that are less lucky. Our form of government is somewhat exclusive, and it is a penalty that we have ever paid for its advantages, to be liable to sudden and malevolent accusations, for any evil turn of fortune that besets the republic."

"Can nothing satisfy these exacting spirits? Are they not free—are they not happy?"

"It would seem that they want better assurance of these facts, than our own feelings, or our words."

"Man is the creature of envy! The poor desire to be rich—the weak, powerful."

"There is an exception to your rule, at least, Signore, since the rich rarely wish to be poor, or the powerful, weak."

"You deride my sentiments, to-night, Signor Gradenigo. I speak, I hope, as becomes a senator of Venice, and in a manner that you are not unaccustomed to hear!"

"Nay, the language is not unusual. But I fear me, there is something unsuited to a falling fortune,

in the exacting and narrow spirit of our laws. When a state is eminently flourishing, its subjects overlook general defects, in private prosperity, but there is no more fastidious commentator on measures than your merchant of a failing trade."

"This is their gratitude! Have we not converted these muddy isles into a mart for half Christendom, and now they are dissatisfied that they cannot retain all the monopolies that the wisdom of our ancestors has accumulated."

"They complain much in your own spirit, Signore,—but you are right in saying the present riot must be looked to. Let us seek his highness, who will go out to the people, with such patricians as may be present, and one of our number as a witness: more than that might expose our character."

The Secret Council withdrew to carry this resolution into effect, just as the fishermen in the court received the accession of those who arrived by water.

There is no body so sensible of an increase of its members as a mob. Without discipline, and dependent solely on animal force for its ascendancy, the sentiment of physical power is blended with its very existence. When they saw the mass of living beings which had assembled within the wall of the ducal palace, the most audacious of that throng became more hardy, and even the wavering grew strong. This is the reverse of the feeling which prevails among those who are called on to repress this species of violence, who generally gain courage as its exhibition is least required.

The throng in the court was raising one of its loudest and most menacing cries as the train of the doge appeared, approaching by one of the long open galleries of the principal floor of the edifice.

The presence of the venerable man who nominally presided over that factitious state, and the long training of the fishermen in habits of deference to

authority, notwithstanding their present tone of insubordination, caused a sudden and deep silence. A feeling of awe gradually stole over the thousand dark faces that were gazing upwards, as the little cortège drew near. So profound, indeed, was the stillness caused by this sentiment, that the rustling of the ducal robes was audible, as the prince, impeded by his infirmities, and consulting the state usual to his rank, slowly advanced. The previous violence of the untutored fishermen, and their present deference to the external state that met their eyes, had its origin in the same causes;—ignorance and habit were the parents of both.

“Why are ye assembled here, my children?” asked the doge, when he had reached the summit of the Giant’s Stairs,—“and most of all, why have ye come into the palace of your prince, with these unbefitting cries?”

The tremulous voice of the old man was clearly audible, for the lowest of its tones was scarcely interrupted by a breath. The fishermen gazed at each other, and all appeared to search for him who might be bold enough to answer. At length one in the centre of the crowded mass, and effectually concealed from observation, cried, “Justice!”

“Such is our object,” mildly continued the prince; “and such, I will add, is our practice. Why are ye assembled here, in a manner so offensive to the state, and so disrespectful to your prince?”

Still none answered. The only spirit of their body, which had been capable of freeing itself from the trammels of usage and prejudice, had deserted the shell which lay on the lower step of the Giant’s Stairs.

“Will none speak?—are ye so bold with your voices when unquestioned, and so silent when confronted?”

“Speak them fair, your highness,” whispered he

of the council, who was commissioned to be a secret witness of the interview;—"the Dalmatians are scarce yet apparelled."

The prince bowed to advice which he well knew must be respected, and he assumed his former tone.

"If none will acquaint me with your wants, I must command you to retire, and while my parental heart grieves——"

"Giustiza!" repeated the hidden member of the crowd.

"Name thy wants, that we may know them."

"Highness! deign to look at this!"

One bolder than the rest had turned the body of Antonio to the moon, in a manner to expose the ghastly features, and, as he spoke, he pointed towards the spectacle he had prepared. The prince started at the unexpected sight, and, slowly descending the steps, closely accompanied by his companions and his guards, he paused over the body.

"Has the assassin done this?" he asked, after looking at the dead fisherman, and crossing himself. "What could the end of one like this profit a Bravo? —haply the unfortunate man hath fallen in a broil of his class?"

"Neither, illustrious doge! we fear that Antonio has suffered for the displeasure of St. Mark!"

"Antonio! Is this the hardy fisherman who would have taught us how to rule in the state regatta!"

"Eccellenza, it is;" returned the simple laborer of the Lagunes,—"and a better hand with a net, or a truer friend in need, never rowed a gondola, to or from the Lido. Diavalo! It would have done your highness pleasure to have seen the poor old Christian among us, on a saint's day, taking the lead in our little ceremonies, and teaching us the manner in which our fathers used to do credit to the craft!"

"Or to have been with us, illustrious doge," cried another, for, the ice once broken, the tongues of a mob soon grow bold, "in a merry-making, on the Lido, when old Antonio was always the foremost in the laugh, and the discreetest in knowing when to be grave."

The doge began to have a dawning of the truth, and he cast a glance aside to examine the countenance of the unknown inquisitor.

"It is far easier to understand the merits of the unfortunate man, than the manner of his death," he said, finding no explanation in the drilled members of the face he had scrutinized. "Will any of your party explain the facts?"

The principal speaker among the fishermen willingly took on himself the office, and, in the desultory manner of one of his habits, he acquainted the doge with the circumstances connected with the finding of the body. When he had done, the prince again asked explanations, with his eye, from the senator at his side, for he was ignorant whether the policy of the state required an example, or simply a death."

"I see nothing in this, your Highness," observed he of the council, "but the chances of a fisherman. The unhappy old man has come to his end by accident, and it would be charity to have a few masses said for his soul."

"Noble senator!" exclaimed the fisherman, doubtfully, "St. Mark was offended!"

"Rumor tells many idle tales of the pleasure and displeasure of St. Mark. If we are to believe all that the wit of men can devise, in affairs of this nature, the criminals are not drowned in the Lagunes, but in the Canale Orfano."

"True, eccellenza, and we are forbidden to cast our nets there, on pain of sleeping with the eels at its bottom."

“ So much greater reason for believing that this old man hath died by accident. Is there mark of violence on his body?—for though the state could scarcely occupy itself with such as he, some other might. Hath the condition of the body been looked to ?”

“ Eccellenza, it was enough to cast one of his years into the centre of the Lagunes. The stoutest arm in Venice could not save him.”

“ There may have been violence in some quarrel, and the proper authority should be vigilant. Here is a Carmelite!—Father, do you know aught of this ?”

The monk endeavored to answer, but his voice failed. He stared wildly about him, for the whole scene resembled some frightful picture of the imagination, and then folding his arms on his bosom, he appeared to resume his prayers.

“ Thou dost not answer, Friar ?” observed the doge, who had been as effectually deceived, by the natural and indifferent manner of the inquisitor, as any other of his auditors. “ Where didst thou find this body ?”

Father Anselmo briefly explained the manner in which he had been pressed into the service of the fishermen.

At the elbow of the prince there stood a young patrician, who, at the moment, filled no other office in the state, than such as belonged to his birth. Deceived, like the others, by the manner of the only one who knew the real cause of Antonio’s death, he felt a humane and praiseworthy desire to make sure that no foul play had been exercised towards the victim.

“ I have heard of this Antonio,” said this person, who was called the Senator Soranzo, and who was gifted by nature with feelings that, in any other form of government, would have made him a phi-

lanthropist,—“ and of his success in the regatta. Was it not said that Jacopo, the Bravo, was his competitor ?”

A low, meaning, and common murmur ran through the throng.

“ A man of his reputed passions and ferocity, may well have sought to revenge defeat, by violence !”

A second, and a louder murmur denoted the effect this suggestion had produced.

“ Eccellenza, Jacopo deals in the stiletto !” observed the half-credulous but still doubting fisherman.

“ That is as may be necessary. A man of his art and character may have recourse to other means to gratify his malice. Do you not agree with me, Signore ?”

The Senator Soranzo put this question, in perfect good faith, to the unknown member of the secret council. The latter appeared struck with the probability of the truth of his companion’s conjecture, but contented himself, with a simple acknowledgment to that effect, by bowing.

“ Jacopo !—Jacopo !” hoarsely repeated voice after voice in the crowd—“ Jacopo has done this ! The best gondolier in Venice has been beaten by an old fisherman, and nothing but blood could wipe out the disgrace !”

“ It shall be inquired into, my children, and strict justice done,” said the doge, preparing to depart. “ Officers, give money for masses, that the soul of the unhappy man be not the sufferer. Reverend Carmelite, I commend the body to thy care, and thou canst do no better service than to pass the night in prayer, by its side.”

A thousand caps were waved in commendation of this gracious command, and the whole throng stood in silent respect, as the prince, followed by his

retinue, retired as he had approached, through the long, vaulted, gallery above.

A secret order of the Inquisition prevented the appearance of the Dalmatians.

A few minutes later and all was prepared. A bier and canopy were brought out of the adjoining cathedral, and the corpse was placed upon the former. Father Anselmo then headed the procession, which passed through the principal gate of the palace into the square, chanting the usual service. The Piazzetta and the piazza were still empty. Here and there, indeed, a curious face, belonging to some agent of the police, or to some observer more firm than common, looked out from beneath the arches of the porticoes on the movements of the mob, though none ventured to come within its influence.

But the fishermen were no longer bent on violence. With the fickleness of men little influenced by reflection, and subject to sudden and violent emotions, a temperament which, the effect of a selfish system, is commonly tortured into the reason why it should never be improved, they had abandoned all idea of revenge on the agents of the police, and had turned their thoughts to the religious services, which, being commanded by the prince himself, were so flattering to their class.

It is true that a few of the sterner natures, among them, mingled menaces against the Bravo, with their prayers for the dead, but these had no other effect on the matter in hand, than is commonly produced by the by-players on the principal action of the piece.

The great portal of the venerable church was thrown open, and the solemn chant was heard issuing, in responses, from among the quaint columns and vaulted roofs within. The body of the lowly and sacrificed Antonio was borne beneath that arch

which sustains the precious relics of Grecian art, and deposited in the nave. Candles glimmered before the altar and around the ghastly person of the dead, throughout the night; and the cathedral of St. Mark was pregnant with all the imposing ceremonials of the Catholic ritual, until the day once more appeared.

Priest succeeded priest, in repeating the masses, while the attentive throng listened, as if each of its members felt that his own honor and importance were elevated by this concession to one of their number. In the square the maskers gradually reappeared, though the alarm had been too sudden and violent, to admit a speedy return to the levity which ordinarily was witnessed in that spot, between the setting and the rising of the sun.

CHAPTER VII.

*'Tis of a lady in her earliest youth,
The very last of that illustrious race.*

Rogers.

WHEN the fishermen landed on the quay, they deserted the gondola of the state to a man. Donna Violetta and her governess heard the tumultuous departure of their singular captors with alarm, for they were nearly in entire ignorance of the motive which had deprived them of the protection of father Anselmo, and which had so unexpectedly made them actors in the extraordinary scene. The monk had simply explained that his offices were required in behalf of the dead, but the apprehension of exciting unnecessary terror prevented him from adding that they were in the power of a mob.

Donna Florinda, however, had ascertained sufficient, by looking from the windows of the canopy, and from the cries of those around her, to get a glimmering of the truth. Under the circumstances, she saw that the most prudent course was to keep themselves as much as possible from observation. But when the profound stillness that succeeded the landing of the rioters announced that they were alone, both she and her charge had an intuitive perception of the favorable chance, which fortune had so strangely thrown in their way.

“They are gone!” whispered Donna Florinda, holding her breath in attention, as soon as she had spoken.

“And the police will be soon here to seek us!”

No further explanation passed, for Venice was a town in which even the young and innocent were taught caution. Donna Florinda stole another look without.

“They have disappeared, Heaven knows where! Let us go!”

In an instant the trembling fugitives were on the quay. The Piazzetta was without a human form, except their own. A low, murmuring, sound arose from the court palace, which resembled the hum of a disturbed hive; but nothing was distinct or intelligible.

“There is violence meditated,” again whispered the governess; “would to God that father Anselmo were here!”

A shuffling footstep caught their ears, and both turned towards a boy, in the dress of one of the Lagunes, who approached from the direction of the Broglio.

“A reverend Carmelite bid me give you this,” said the youth, stealing a glance behind him, like one who dreaded detection. Then putting a small piece of paper in the hand of Donna Florinda, he

turned his own swarthy palm, in which a small silver coin glittered, to the moon, and vanished.

By the aid of the same light the governess succeeded in tracing pencil-marks, in a hand that had been well known to her younger days.

“Save thyself, Florinda—There is not an instant to lose. Avoid public places, and seek a shelter quickly.”

“But whither?” asked the bewildered woman, when she had read aloud the scroll.

“Anywhere but here,” rejoined Donna Violetta; “follow me.”

Nature frequently more than supplies the advantages of training and experience, by her own gifts. Had Donna Florinda been possessed of the natural decision and firmness of her pupil, she would not now have been existing in the isolated condition which is so little congenial to female habits, nor would father Anselmo have been a monk. Both had sacrificed inclination to what they considered to be duty, and if the ungenial life of the governess was owing to the tranquil course of her ordinary feelings, it is probable that its impunity was to be ascribed to the same respectable cause. Not so with Violetta. She was ever more ready to act than to reflect, and though, in general, the advantage might possibly be with those of a more regulated temperament, there are occasions that form exceptions to the rule. The present moment was one of those turns in the chances of life, when it is always better to do any thing than to do nothing.

Donna Violetta had scarcely spoken, before her person was shadowed beneath the arches of the Broglio. Her governess clung to her side, more in affection than in compliance with the warning of the monk, or with the dictates of her own reason. A vague and romantic intention of throwing herself at the feet of the doge, who was a collateral descend-

ant of her own ancient house, had flashed across the mind of the youthful bride, when she first fled ; but no sooner had they reached the palace, than a cry from the court acquainted them with its situation, and consequently with the impossibility of penetrating to the interior.

“ Let us retire, by the streets, to thy dwelling, my child,” said Donna Florinda, drawing her mantle about her in womanly dignity. “ None will offend females of our condition ; even the senate must, in the end, respect our sex.”

“ This from thee, Florinda !—Thou, who hast so often trembled for their anger ! But go, if thou wilt—I am no longer the senate’s.—Don Camillo Monforte has my duty.”

Donna Florinda had no intention of disputing this point, and as the moment had now arrived when the most energetic was likely to lead, she quietly submitted herself to the superior decision of her pupil. The latter took the way along the portico, keeping always within its shadows. In passing the gateway, which opened towards the sea, the fugitives had a glimpse of what was passing in the court. The sight quickened their steps, and they now flew, rather than ran, along the arched passage. In a minute they were on the bridge, which crosses the canal of St. Mark, still flying with all their force. A few mariners were looking from their feluccas and gazing in curiosity, but the sight of two terrified females, seeking refuge from a mob, had nothing in itself likely to attract notice.

At this moment, a dark mass of human bodies appeared advancing along the quay in the opposite direction. Arms glittered in the moon-beams, and the measured tread of trained men became audible. The Dalmatians were moving down from the arsenal in a body. Advance and retreat now seemed equally impossible to the breathless fugitives. As decision

and self-possession are very different qualities, Donna Violetta did not understand so readily as the circumstances required, that it was more than probable the hirelings of the republic would consider the flight perfectly natural, as it had appeared to the curious gazers of the port.

Terror made them blind, and as shelter was now the sole object of the fugitives, they would probably have sought it in the chamber of doom, itself, had there been an opportunity. As it was, they turned and entered the first, and indeed the only, gate which offered. They were met by a girl, whose anxious face betrayed that singular compound of self-devotion and terror, which probably has its rise in the instinct of feminine sympathies.

"Here is safety, noble ladies," said the youthful Venetian, in the soft accent of her native islands; "none will dare do you harm within these walls."

"Into whose palace have I entered?" demanded the half-breathless Violetta. "If its owner has a name in Venice, he will not refuse hospitality to a daughter of Tiepolo."

"Signora, you are welcome," returned the gentle girl, curtseying low, and still leading the way deeper within the vast edifice. "You bear the name of an illustrious house!"

"There are few in the republic of note, from whom I may not claim, either the kindness of ancient and near services, or that of kindred. Dost thou serve a noble master?"

"The first in Venice, lady."

"Name him, that we may demand his hospitality as befits us."

"Saint Mark."

Donna Violetta and her governess stopped short.

"Have we unconsciously entered a portal of the palace?"

"That were impossible, lady, since the canal lies

between you and the residence of the doge. Still is St. Mark master here. I hope you will not esteem your safety less, because it has been obtained in the public prison, and by the aid of its keeper's daughter."

The moment for headlong decision was passed, and that of reflection had returned.

"How art thou called, child?" asked Donna Florinda, moving ahead of her pupil and taking the discourse up, where in wonder the other had permitted it to pause. "We are truly grateful for the readiness with which thou threw open the gate for our admission, in a moment of such alarm—How art thou called?"

"Gelsomina," answered the modest girl. "I am the keeper's only child—and when I saw ladies of your honorable condition, fleeing on the quay, with the Dalmatians marching on one side, and a mob shouting on the other, I bethought me that even a prison might be welcome."

"Thy goodness of heart did not mislead thee."

"Had I known it was a lady of the Tiepolo, I should have been even more ready; for there are few of that great name now left to do us honor."

Violetta curtsied to the compliment, but she seemed uneasy that haste and pride of rank had led her, so indiscreetly, to betray herself.

"Canst thou not lead us to some place less public?" she asked, observing that her conductor had stopped in a public corridor to make this explanation.

"Here you will be retired as in your own palaces, great ladies;" answered Gelsomina, turning into a private passage, and leading the way towards the rooms of her family, from a window of which she had first witnessed the embarrassment of her guests. "None enter here, without cause, but my father and myself; and my father is much occupied with his charge."

"Hast thou no domestic?"

"None, lady. A prison-keeper's daughter should not be too proud to serve herself."

"Thou sayest well. One of thy discretion, good Gelsomina, must know it is not seemly for females of condition to be thrown within walls like these, even by accident, and thou wilt do us much favor, by taking more than common means, to be certain that we are unseen. We give thee much trouble, but it shall not go unrequited. Here is gold."

Gelsomina did not answer, but as she stood with her eyes cast to the floor, the color stole to her cheeks, until her usually bloodless face was in a soft glow.

"Nay, I have mistaken thy character!" said Donna Florinda, secreting the sequins, and taking the unresisting hand of the silent girl. "If I have pained thee, by my indiscretion, attribute the offer to our dread of the disgrace of being seen in this place."

The glow deepened, and the lips of the girl quivered.

"Is it then a disgrace to be innocently within these walls, lady?" she asked, still with an averted eye. "I have long suspected this, but none has ever before said it, in my hearing!"

"Holy Maria pardon me! If I have uttered a syllable to pain thee, excellent girl, it has been unwittingly and without intention!"

"We are poor, lady, and the needy must submit to do that which their wishes might lead them to avoid. I understand your feelings, and will make sure of your being secret, and Blessed Maria will pardon a greater sin, than any you have committed here."

While the ladies were wondering, at witnessing such proofs of delicacy and feeling in so singular a place, the girl withdrew.

"I had not expected this in a prison!" exclaimed Violetta.

"As all is not noble, or just, in a palace, neither is all to be condemned unheard, that we find in a prison. But this is, in sooth, an extraordinary girl for her condition, and we are indebted to blessed St. Theodore, (crossing herself,) for putting her in our way."

"Can we do better than by making her a confidant and a friend?"

The governess was older, and less disposed than her pupil, to confide in appearances. But the more ardent mind and superior rank of the latter had given her an influence, that the former did not always successfully resist. Gelsomina returned before there was time to discuss the prudence of what Violetta had proposed.

"Thou hast a father, Gelsomina?" asked the Venetian heiress, taking the hand of the gentle girl, as she put her question.

"Holy Maria be praised!—I have still that happiness."

"It is a happiness—for surely a father would not have the heart to sell his own child to ambition and mercenary hopes! And thy mother?"

"Has long been bed-ridden, lady. I believe we should not have been here, but we have no other place so suitable for her sufferings, as this jail."

"Gelsomina, thou art happier than I, even in thy prison. I am fatherless—motherless—I could almost say, friendless."

"And this from a lady of the Tiepolo!"

"All is not as it seems in this evil world, kind Gelsomina. We have had many doges, but we have had much suffering. Thou mayest have heard that the house of which I come is reduced to a single, youthful girl like thyself, who has been left in the senate's charge?"

"They speak little of these matters, lady, in Venice; and, of all here, none go so seldom into the square as I. Still have I heard of the beauty and riches of Donna Violetta. The last I hope is true; the first I now see is so."

The daughter of Tiepolo colored, in turn, but it was not in resentment.

"They have spoken in too much kindness for an orphan," she answered; "though that fatal wealth is perhaps not over-estimated. Thou knowest that the state charges itself with the care and establishment of all noble females, whom Providence has left fatherless?"

"Lady, I did not. It is kind of St. Mark to do it!"

"Thou wilt think differently, anon. Thou art young, Gelsomina, and hast passed thy time in privacy?"

"True, lady. It is seldom I go farther than my mother's room, or the cell of some suffering prisoner."

Violetta looked towards her governess, with an expression which seemed to say, that she anticipated her appeal would be made in vain, to one so little exposed to the feelings of the world.

"Thou wilt not understand then, that a noble female may have little inclination to comply with all the senate's wishes, in disposing of her duties and affections?"

Gelsomina gazed at the fair speaker, but it was evident that she did not clearly comprehend the question. Again Violetta looked at the governess as if asking aid.

"The duties of our sex are often painful," said Donna Florinda, "understanding the appeal with female instinct. Our attachments may not always follow the wishes of our friends. We may not choose, but we cannot always obey."

"I have heard that noble ladies are not suffered to

see those to whom they are to be wedded, Signora, if that is what your eccellenza means, and, to me, the custom has always seemed unjust, if not cruel."

"And are females of thy class permitted to make friends among those who may become dearer at any other day?" asked Violetta.

"Lady, we have that much freedom even in the prisons."

"Then art thou happier than those of the palaces! I will trust thee, generous girl, for thou canst not be unfaithful to the weakness and wrongs of thy sex."

Gelsomina raised a hand, as if to stop the impetuous confidence of her guest, and then she listened intently.

"Few enter, here," she said; "but there are many ways of learning secrets within these walls which are still unknown to me. Come deeper into the rooms, noble ladies, for here is a place that I have reason to think is safe, even from listeners."

The keeper's daughter led the way into the little room, in which she was accustomed to converse with Jacopo.

"You were saying, lady, that I had a feeling for the weakness and helplessness of our sex, and surely you did me justice."

Violetta had leisure to reflect an instant, in passing from one room to the other, and she began her communications with more reserve. But the sensitive interest that a being of the gentle nature and secluded habits of Gelsomina took in her narrative, won upon her own natural frankness, and, in a manner nearly imperceptible to herself, she made the keeper's daughter mistress of most of the circumstances under which she had entered the prison.

The cheek of Gelsomina became colorless as she listened, and when Donna Violetta ceased, every limb of her slight frame trembled with interest.

"The senate is a fearful power to resist!" she said, speaking so low as hardly to be audible. "Have you reflected, lady, on the chances of what you do?"

"If I have not, it is now too late to change my intentions. I am the wife of the Duke of Sant' Agata, and can never wed another."

"Gesu!—This is true.—And yet, methinks, I would choose to die a nun rather than offend the council!"

"Thou knowest not, good girl, to what courage the heart of even a young wife is equal.—Thou art still bound to thy father, in the instruction and habits of childhood, but thou mayest live to know that all thy hopes will centre in another."

Gelsomina ceased to tremble, and her mild eye brightened.

"The council is terrible," she answered, "but it must be more terrible to desert one to whom you have vowed duty and love at the altar!"

"Hast thou the means of concealing us, kind girl," interrupted Donna Florinda, "and canst thou, when this tumult shall be quieted, in any manner help us to farther secrecy or flight?"

"Lady, I have none. Even the streets and squares of Venice are nearly strangers to me. Santissima Maria! what would I give to know the ways of the town as well as my cousin Annina, who passes, at will, from her father's shop to the Lido, and from St. Mark's to the Rialto, as her pleasure suits. I will send for my cousin, who will counsel us in this fearful strait!"

"Thy cousin!—Hast thou a cousin named Annina?"

"Lady, Annina. My mother's sister's child."

"The daughter of a wine-seller called Tomaso Torti?"

"Do the noble dames of the city take such heed
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of their inferiors!—This will charm my cousin, for she has great desires to be noted by the great."

"And does thy cousin come hither?"

"Rarely, lady—We are not of much intimacy. I suppose Annina finds a girl, simple and uninstructed as I, unworthy of her company. But she will not refuse to aid us, in a danger like this. I know she little loves the republic, for we have had words on its acts, and my cousin has been bolder of speech about them, than befits one of her years, in this prison."

"Gelsomina, thy cousin is a secret agent of the police, and unworthy of thy confidence—"

"Lady!"

"I do not speak without reason. Trust me, she is employed in duties that are unbecoming her sex, and unworthy of thy confidence."

"Noble dames, I will not say any thing to do displeasure to your high rank and present distress, but you should not urge me to think thus of my mother's niece. You have been unhappy, and you may have cause to dislike the republic, and you are safe here—but I do not desire to hear Annina censured."

Both Donna Florinda and her less experienced pupil knew enough of human nature, to consider this generous incredulity as a favorable sign of the integrity of her who manifested it, and they wisely contented themselves with stipulating that Annina should, on no account, be made acquainted with their situation. After this understanding, the three discussed, more leisurely, the prospect of the fugitives being able to quit the place, when ready, without detection.

At the suggestion of the governess, a servitor of the prison was sent out by Gelsomina, to observe the state of the square. He was particularly charged, though in a manner to avoid suspicion, to

search for a Carmelite of the order of the bare-footed friars. On his return, the menial reported that the mob had quitted the court of the palace, and was gone to the cathedral, with the body of the fisherman who had so unexpectedly gained the prize in the regatta of the preceding day.

“Repeat your aves and go to sleep, Bella Gelsomina,” concluded the sub-keeper, “for the fishermen have left off shouting to say their prayers. Per Diana! The bare-headed and bare-legged rascals are as impudent as if St. Mark were their inheritance! The noble patricians should give them a lesson in modesty, by sending every tenth knave among them to the galleys. Miscreants! to disturb the quiet of an orderly town with their vulgar complaints!”

“But thou hast said nothing of the friar; is he with the rioters?”

“There is a Carmelite at the altar—but my blood boiled at seeing such vagabonds disturb the peace of respectable persons, and I took little note of his air or years.”

“Then thou failedst to do the errand on which I sent thee. It is now too late to repair thy fault. Thou canst return to thy charge.”

“A million pardons, Bellissima Gelsomina, but indignation is the uppermost feeling, when one in office sees his rights attacked by the multitude. Send me to Corfu, or to Candia, if you please, and I will bring back the color of every stone in their prisons, but do not send me among rebels. My gorge rises at the sight of villainy!”

As the keeper’s daughter withdrew, while her father’s assistant was making this protestation of loyalty, the latter was compelled to give vent to the rest of his indignation in a soliloquy.

One of the tendencies of oppression is to create a scale of tyranny, descending from those who rule

a state, to those who domineer over a single individual. He, who has been much accustomed to view men, need not be told that none are so arrogant with their inferiors, as those who are oppressed by their superiors; for poor human nature has a secret longing to revenge itself on the weak for all the injuries it receives from the strong. On the other hand, no class is so willing to render that deference, when unexacted, which is the proper meed of virtue, and experience, and intelligence, as he who knows that he is fortified on every side against innovations on his natural rights. Thus it is, that there is more security against popular violence and popular insults in these free states, than in any other country on earth, for there is scarcely a citizen so debased as not to feel that, in assuming the appearance of a wish to revenge the chances of fortune, he is making an undue admission of inferiority.

Though the torrent may be pent and dammed by art, it is with the constant hazard of breaking down the unnatural barriers; but left to its own course, it will become the tranquil and the deep stream, until it finally throws off its superfluous waters into the common receptacle of the ocean.

When Gelsomina returned to her visitors, it was with a report favorable to their tranquillity. The riot in the court of the palace, and the movement of the Dalmatians, had drawn all eyes in another direction; and although some errant gaze might have witnessed their entrance into the gate of the prison, it was so natural a circumstance, that no one would suspect females of their appearance of remaining there an instant longer than was necessary. The momentary absence of the few servants of the prison, who took little heed of those who entered the open parts of the building, and who had been drawn away by curiosity, completed their security. The humble room they were in was exclusively devoted

to the use of their gentle protector, and there was scarcely a possibility of interruption, until the council had obtained the leisure and the means of making use of those terrible means, which rarely left any thing it wished to know concealed.

With this explanation *Donna* *Violetta* and her companion were greatly satisfied. It left them leisure to devise means for their flight, and kindled a hope, in the former, of being speedily restored to *Don Camillo*. Still there existed the cruel embarrassment of not possessing the means of acquainting the latter with their situation. As the tumult ceased, they resolved to seek a boat, favored by such disguises as the means of *Gelsomina* could supply, and to row to his palace; but reflection convinced *Donna* *Florinda* of the danger of such a step, since the Neapolitan was known to be surrounded by the agents of the police. Accident, which is more effectual than stratagem in defeating intrigues, had thrown them into a place of momentary security, and it would be to lose the vantage-ground of their situation to cast themselves, without the utmost caution, into the hazards of the public canals.

At length the governess bethought her of turning the services of the gentle creature, who had already shown so much sympathy in their behalf, to account. During the revelations of her pupil, the feminine instinct of *Donna* *Florinda* had enabled her to discover the secret springs which moved the unpractised feelings of their auditor. *Gelsomina* had listened to the manner in which *Don Camillo* had thrown himself into the canal to save the life of *Violetta*, with breathless admiration; her countenance was a pure reflection of her thoughts, when the daughter of *Tiepolo* spoke of the risks he had run to gain her love, and woman glowed in every lineament of her mild face, when the youthful bride touched on the nature of the engrossing tie which had united them,

and which was far too holy to be severed by the senate's policy.

"If we had the means of getting our situation to the ears of Don Camillo," said the governess, "all might yet be saved; else will this happy refuge in the prison avail us nothing."

"Is the cavalier of too stout a heart to shrink before those up above?" demanded Gelsomina.

"He would summon the people of his confidence, and ere the dawn of day we might still be beyond their power. Those calculating senators will deal with the vows of my pupil, as if they were childish oaths, and set the anger of the Holy See itself at defiance, when there is question of their interest."

"But the sacrament of marriage is not of man; that, at least, they will respect!"

"Believe it not. There is no obligation so solemn as to be respected, when their policy is concerned. What are the wishes of a girl, or what the happiness of a solitary and helpless female, to their fortunes? That my charge is young, is a reason why their wisdom should interfere, though it is none to touch their hearts with the reflection that the misery to which they would condemn her, is to last the longer. They take no account of the solemn obligations of gratitude; the ties of affection are so many means of working upon the fears of those they rule, but none for forbearance; and they laugh at the devotedness of woman's love, as a folly to amuse their leisure, or to take off the edge of disappointment in graver concerns."

"Can any thing be more grave than wedlock, lady?"

"To them it is important, as it furnishes the means of perpetuating their honors and their proud names. Beyond this, the councils look little at domestic interests."

"They are fathers and husbands!"

"True, for to be legally the first, they must become the last. Marriage to them is not a tie of sacred and dear affinity, but the means of increasing their riches and of sustaining their names;" continued the governess, watching the effect of her words on the countenance of the guileless girl. "They call marriages of affection children's games, and they deal with the wishes of their own daughters, as they would traffic with their commodities of commerce. When a state sets up an idol of gold as its god, few will refuse to sacrifice at its altar!"

"I would I might serve the noble Donna Violletta!"

"Thou art too young, good Gelsomina, and I fear too little practised in the cunning of Venice."

"Doubt me not, lady; for I can do my duty like another, in a good cause."

"If it were possible to convey to Don Camillo Monforte a knowledge of our situation—but thou art too inexperienced for the service!"

"Believe it not, Signora," interrupted the generous Gelsomina, whose pride began to stimulate her natural sympathies with one so near her own age, and one too, like herself, subject to that passion which engrosses a female heart. "I may be apter than my appearance would give reason to think."

"I will trust thee, kind girl, and if the Sainted Virgin protects us, thy fortunes shall not be forgotten!"

The pious Gelsomina crossed herself, and, first acquainting her companions with her intentions, she went within to prepare herself, while Donna Florinda penned a note, in terms so guarded as to defy detection in the event of accident, but which might suffice to let the lord of St. Agata understand their present situation.

In a few minutes the keeper's daughter reappear-

ed. Her ordinary attire, which was that of a modest Venetian maiden of humble condition, needed no concealment; and the mask, an article of dress which none in that city were without, effectually disguised her features. She then received the note, with the name of the street, and the palace she was to seek, a description of the person of the Neapolitan, with often-repeated cautions to be wary, and departed.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Which is the wiser here?—Justice or iniquity?”

Measure for Measure.

IN the constant struggle between the innocent and the artful, the latter have the advantage, so long as they confine themselves to familiar interests. But the moment the former conquer their disgust for the study of vice, and throw themselves upon the protection of their own high principles, they are far more effectually concealed from the calculations of their adversaries, than if they practised the most refined of their subtle expedients. Nature has given to every man enough of frailty to enable him to estimate the workings of selfishness and fraud, but her truly privileged are those who can shroud their motives and intentions in a degree of justice and disinterestedness, which surpass the calculations of the designing. Millions may bow to the commands of a conventional right, but few, indeed, are they who know how to choose in novel and difficult cases. There is often a mystery in virtue. While the cunning of vice is no more than a pitiful imitation of

that art, which endeavors to cloke its workings in the thin veil of deception, the other, in some degree, resembles the sublimity of infallible truth.

Thus men, too much practised in the interests of life, constantly overreach themselves, when brought in contact with the simple and intelligent ; and the experience of every day proves, that, as there is no fame permanent which is not founded on virtue, so there is no policy secure which is not bottomed on the good of the whole. Vulgar minds may control the concerns of a community, so long as they are limited to vulgar views ; but woe to the people who confide, on great emergencies, in any but the honest, the noble, the wise, and the philanthropic ; for there is no security for success when the meanly artful control the occasional and providential events which regenerate a nation. More than half the misery which has defeated, as well as disgraced, civilization, proceeds from neglecting to use those great men that are always created by great occasions.

Treating, as we are, of the vices of the Venetian system, our pen has run truant with its subject, since the application of the moral must be made on the familiar scale suited to the incidents of our story. It has already been seen that Gelsomina was intrusted with certain important keys of the prison. For this trust there had been sufficient motive with the wily guardians of the jail, who had made their calculations on her serving their particular orders, without ever suspecting that she was capable of so far listening to the promptings of a generous temper, as might induce her to use them in any manner prejudicial to their own views. The service to which they were now to be applied, proved that the keepers, one of which was her own father, had not fully known how to estimate the powers of the innocent and simple.

Provided with the keys in question, Gelsomina took a lamp, and passed upward from the mezzinino in which she dwelt, to the first floor of the edifice, instead of descending to its court. Door was opened after door, and many a gloomy corridor was passed by the gentle girl, with the confidence of one who knew her motive to be good. She soon crossed the Bridge of Sighs, fearless of interruption in that unfrequented gallery, and entered the palace. Here she made her way to a door that opened on the common and public vomitories of the structure. Moving with sufficient care to make impunity from detection sure, she extinguished the light, and applied the key. At the next instant she was on the vast and gloomy stair-way. It required but a moment to descend it, and to reach the covered gallery which surrounded the court. A halberdier was within a few feet of her. He looked at the unknown female with interest; but as it was not his business to question those who issued from the building, nothing was said. Gelsomina walked on. A half-repenting, but vindictive being, was dropping an accusation in the lion's mouth. Gelsomina stopped involuntarily, until the secret accuser had done his treacherous work and departed. Then, when she was about to proceed, she saw that the halberdier, at the head of the Giant's stairway, was smiling at her indecision, like one accustomed to such scenes.

"Is there danger in quitting the palace?" she asked of the rough mountaineer.

"Corpo di Bacco! There might have been, an hour since, Bella Donna; but the rioters are muzzled, and at their prayers!"

Gelsomina hesitated no longer. She descended the well-known flight, down which the head of Faliero had rolled, and was soon beneath the arch of the gate. Here the timid and unpractised girl again stopped, for she could not venture into the square

without assuring herself, like a deer about to quit its cover, of the tranquillity of the place, into which she was to enter.

The agents of the police had been too much alarmed by the rising of the fishermen, not to call their usual ingenuity and finesse into play, the moment the disturbance was appeased. Money had been given to the mountebanks and ballad-singers to induce them to reappear, and groups of hirelings, some in masks and others without concealment, were ostentatiously assembled in different parts of the piazza. In short, those usual expedients were resorted to, which are constantly used to restore the confidence of a people, in those countries in which civilization is so new, that they are not yet considered sufficiently advanced to be the guardians of their own security. There are few artifices so shallow that many will not be their dupes. The idler, the curious, the really discontented, the factious, the designing, with a suitable mixture of the unthinking, and of those who only live for the pleasure of the passing hour, a class not the least insignificant for numbers, had lent themselves to the views of the police; and when Gelsomina was ready to enter the Piazzetta, she found both the squares partially filled. A few excited fishermen clustered about the doors of the cathedral, like bees swarming before their hive; but, on that side, there was no very visible cause of alarm. Unaccustomed as she was to scenes like that before her, the first glance assured the gentle girl of the real privacy which so singularly distinguishes the solitude of a crowd. Gathering her simple mantle more closely about her form, and settling her mask with care, she moved with a swift step into the centre of the piazza.

We shall not detail the progress of our heroine, as, avoiding the commonplace gallantry that assailed and offended her ear, she went her way, on her

errand of kindness. Young, active, and impelled by her intentions, the square was soon passed, and she reached the place of San Nico. Here was one of the landings of the public gondolas. But, at the moment, there was no boat in waiting, for curiosity or fear had induced the men to quit their usual stand. Gelsomina had ascended the bridge, and was on the crown of its arch, when a gondolier came sweeping lazily in from the direction of the Grand Canal. Her hesitation and doubting manner attracted his attention, and the man made the customary sign, which conveyed the offer of his services. As she was nearly a stranger to the streets of Venice, labyrinths, that offer greater embarrassment to the uninitiated, than perhaps the passages of any other town of its size, she gladly availed herself of the offer. To descend to the steps, to leap into the boat, to utter the word "Rialto," and to conceal herself in the pavilion, was the business of a minute. The boat was instantly in motion.

Gelsomina now believed herself secure of effecting her purpose, since there was little to apprehend from the knowledge, or the designs, of a common boatman. He could not know her object, and it was his interest to carry her, in safety, to the place she had commanded. But so important was success, that she could not feel secure of attaining it, while it was still unaccomplished. She soon summoned sufficient resolution to look out at the palaces and boats they were passing, and she felt the refreshing air of the canal revive her courage. Then turning, with sensitive distrust, to examine the countenance of the gondolier, she saw that his features were concealed beneath a mask that was so well designed, as not to be perceptible to a casual observer by moonlight.

Though it was common, on occasions, for the servants of the great, it was not usual for the public

gondoliers, to be disguised. The circumstance itself was one justly to excite slight apprehension, though, on second thoughts, Gelsomina saw no more in it, than a return from some expedition of pleasure, or some serenade, perhaps, in which the caution of a lover had compelled his followers to resort to this species of concealment.

“Shall I put you on the public quay, Signora,” demanded the gondolier, “or shall I see you to the gate of your own palace?”

The heart of Gelsomina beat high. She liked the tone of the voice, though it was necessarily smothered by the mask, but she was little accustomed to act in the affairs of others, and less still in any of so great interest, that the sounds caused her to tremble like one less worthily employed.

“Dost thou know the palace of a certain Don Camillo Monforte, a lord of Calabria, who dwells, here, in Venice?” she asked, after a moment’s pause. The gondolier sensibly betrayed surprise, by the manner in which he started at the question.

“Would you be rowed there, lady?”

“If thou art certain of knowing the palazzo.”

The water stirred, and the gondola glided between high walls. Gelsomina knew, by the sound, that they were in one of the smaller canals, and she augured well of the boatman’s knowledge of the town. They soon stopped by the side of a water-gate, and the man appeared on the step, holding an arm, to aid her in ascending, after the manner of people of his craft. Gelsomina bade him wait her return, and proceeded.

There was a marked derangement in the household of Don Camillo, that one more practised than our heroine would have noted. The servants seemed undecided, in the manner of performing the most ordinary duties; their looks wandered distrustfully from one to the other, and when their half-frightened

visitor entered the vestibule, though all arose, none advanced to meet her. A female masked was not a rare sight, in Venice, for few of that sex went upon the canals, without using the customary means of concealment; but it would seem, by their hesitating manner, that the menials of Don Camillo did not view the entrance of her, who now appeared, with the usual indifference.

“I am in the dwelling of the Duke of St. Agata, a Signore of Calabria ?” demanded Gelsomina, who saw the necessity of being firm.

“Signora, si——”

“Is your lord in the palace ?”

“Signora, he is—and he is not. What beautiful lady shall I tell him does him this honor ?”

“If he be not at home, it will not be necessary to tell him any thing. If he is, I could wish to see him.”

The domestics, of whom there were several, put their heads together, and seemed to dispute on the propriety of receiving the visit. At this instant, a gondolier, in a flowered jacket, entered the vestibule. Gelsomina took courage at his good-natured eye and frank manner.

“Do you serve Don Camillo Monforte ?” she asked, as he passed her, on his way to the canal.

“With the oar, Bellissima Donna,” answered Gino, touching his cap, though scarce looking aside at the question.

“And could he be told that a female wishes earnestly to speak to him in private ?—A female.”

“Santa Maria ! Bella Donna, there is no end to females who come on these errands, in Venice. You might better pay a visit to the statue of San Teodore, in the piazza, than see my master at this moment; the stone will give you the better reception.”

“And this he commands you to tell all of my sex who come !”

“Diavolo !—Lady, you are particular in your

questions. Perhaps my master might, on a strait, receive one of the sex, I could name, but on the honor of a gondolier he is not the most gallant cavalier of Venice, just at this moment."

"If there is one to whom he would pay this deference, you are bold for a servitor. How know you I am not that one?"

Gino started. He examined the figure of the applicant, and lifting his cap he bowed.

"Lady, I do not know any thing about it," he said; "you may be his Highness the Doge, or the ambassador of the emperor. I pretend to know nothing in Venice, of late——"

The words of Gino were cut short by a tap on the shoulder from the public gondolier, who had hastily entered the vestibule. The man whispered in the ear of Don Camillo's servitor.

"This is not a moment to refuse any," he said.—"Let the stranger go up."

Gino hesitated no longer. With the decision of a favored menial he pushed the groom of the chambers aside, and offered to conduct Gelsomina, himself, to the presence of his master. As they ascended the stairs, three of the inferior servants disappeared.

The palace of Don Camillo had an air of more than Venetian gloom. The rooms were dimly lighted, many of the walls had been stripped of the most precious of their pictures, and, in other respects a jealous eye might have detected evidence of a secret intention, on the part of its owner, not to make a permanent residence of the dwelling. But these were particulars that Gelsomina did not note, as she followed Gino through the apartments, into the more private parts of the building. Here the gondolier unlocked a door, and regarding his companion with an air, half-doubting, half-respectful, he made a sign for her to enter.

"My master commonly receives the ladies, here,"

he said. "Enter, eccellenza, while I run to tell him of his happiness."

Gelsomina did not hesitate, though she felt a violent throb at the heart, when she heard the key turning in the lock, behind her. She was in an ante-chamber, and, inferring from the light which shone through the door of an adjoining room, that she was to proceed, she went on. No sooner had she entered the little closet, than she found herself alone with one of her own sex.

"Annina!" burst from the lips of the unpractised prison-girl, under the impulse of surprise.

"Gelsomina!—The simple, quiet, whispering, modest, Gelsomina!" returned the other.

The words of Annina admitted but of one construction. Wounded, like the bruised sensitive plant, Gelsomina withdrew her mask, for air, actually gasping for breath, between offended pride and wonder.

"Thou here!" she added, scarce knowing what she uttered.

"Thou here!" repeated Annina, with such a laugh, as escapes the degraded, when they believe the innocent reduced to their own level.

"Nay—I come on an errand of pity."

"Santa Maria! we are both here with the same end!"

"Annina! I know not what thou would'st say!—This is surely the palace of Don Camillo Monforte!—A noble Neapolitan, who urges claims to the honors of the senate?"

"The gayest—the handsomest—the richest, and the most inconstant cavalier in Venice! Hadst thou been here, a thousand times, thou could'st not be better informed!"

Gelsomina listened in horror. Her artful cousin, who knew her character to the full extent that vice can comprehend innocence, watched her colorless

cheek and contracting eye, with secret triumph. At the first moment, she had believed all that she insinuated, but second thoughts, and a view of the visible distress of the frightened girl, gave a new direction to her suspicions.

“But I tell thee nothing new,” she quickly added. “I only regret thou should’st find me, where, no doubt, you expected to meet the Duca di Sant’ Agata himself.”

“Annina!—This from thee!”

“Thou surely didst not come to his palace to seek thy cousin!”

Gelsomina had long been familiar with grief, but until this moment she had never felt the deep humiliation of shame. Tears started from her eyes, and she sunk back into a seat, in utter inability to stand.

“I would not distress thee out of bearing,” added the artful daughter of the wine-seller. “But that we are both in the closet of the gayest cavalier of Venice, is beyond dispute.”

“I have told thee that pity for another brought me hither.”

“Pity for Don Camillo.”

“For a noble lady—a young, a virtuous, and a beautiful wife—a daughter of the Tiepolo—of the Tiepolo, Annina!”

“Why should a lady of the Tiepolo employ a girl of the public prisons!”

“Why!—because there has been injustice by those up above. There has been a tumult among the fishermen—and the lady with her governess were liberated by the rioters—and his Highness spoke to them in the great court—and the Dalmatians were on the quay—and the prison was a refuge for ladies of their quality, in a moment of so great terror—and the Holy Church itself has blessed their love——”

Gelsomina could utter no more, but breathless with

the wish to vindicate herself, and wounded to the soul by the strange embarrassment of her situation, she sobbed aloud. Incoherent as had been her language, she had said enough to remove every doubt from the mind of Annina. Privy to the secret marriage, to the rising of the fishermen, and to the departure of the ladies, from the convent on a distant island, where they had been carried on quitting their own palace, the preceding night, and whether she had been compelled to conduct Don Camillo, who had ascertained the departure of those he sought without discovering their destination, the daughter of the wine-seller readily comprehended, not only the errand of her cousin, but the precise situation of the fugitives.

“And thou believest this fiction, Gelsomina?” she said, affecting pity for her cousin’s credulity. “The characters of thy pretended daughter of Tiepolo and her governess are no secrets to those who frequent the piazza of San Marco.”

“Hadst thou seen the beauty and innocence of the lady, Annina, thou would’st not say this!”

“Blessed San Theodoro! What is more beautiful than vice! ’Tis the cheapest artifice of the devil to deceive frail sinners. This thou hast heard of thy confessor, Gelsomina, or he is of much lighter discourse than mine.”

“But why should a woman of this life enter the prisons?”

“They had good reasons to dread the Dalmatians, no doubt. But, it is in my power to tell thee more, of these thou hast entertained, with such peril to thine own reputation. There are women in Venice who discredit their sex in various ways, and these, more particularly she who calls herself Florinda, is notorious for her agency in robbing St. Mark of his revenue. She has received a largess, from the Neapolitan, of wines grown on his Cala-

brian mountains, and wishing to tamper with my honesty, she offered the liquor to me, expecting one like me to forget my duty, and to aid her in deceiving the republic."

"Can this be true, Annina!"

"Why should I deceive thee? Are we not sister's children, and though affairs on the Lido keep me much from thy company, is not the love between us natural? I complained to the authorities, and the liquors were seized, and the pretended noble ladies were obliged to hide themselves this very day. 'Tis thought they wish to flee the city, with their profligate Neapolitan. Driven to take shelter, they have sent thee to acquaint him with their hiding-place, in order that he may come to their aid."

"And why art thou here, Annina?"

"I marvel that thou didst not put the question sooner. Gino, the gondolier of Don Camillo, has long been an unfavorable suitor of mine, and when this Florinda complained of my having, what every honest girl in Venice should do, exposed her fraud to the authorities, he advised his master to seize me, partly in revenge, and partly with the vain hope of making me retract the complaint I have made. Thou hast heard of the bold violence of these cavaliers when thwarted in their wills."

Annina then related the manner of her seizure, with sufficient exactitude, merely concealing those facts that it was not her interest to reveal.

"But there is a lady of the Tiepolo, Annina!"

"As sure as there are cousins like ourselves. Santa Madre di Dio! that women so treacherous and so bold should have met one of thy innocence! It would have been better had they fallen in with me, who am too ignorant for their cunning, blessed St. Anna knows!—but who has not to learn their true characters."

“They did speak of thee, Annina!”

The glance, which the wine-seller’s daughter threw at her cousin, was such as the treacherous serpent casts at the bird; but preserving her self-possession, she added—

“Not to my favor; it would sicken me to hear words of favor from such as they!”

“They are not thy friends, Annina.”

“Perhaps they told thee, child, that I was in the employment of the council?”

“Indeed they did.”

“No wonder. Your dishonest people can never believe one can do an act of pure conscience. But, here comes the Neapolitan.—Note the libertine, Gelsomina, and thou wilt feel for him the same disgust as I!”

The door opened, and Don Camillo Monforte entered. There was an appearance of distrust in his manner, which proved that he did not expect to meet his bride. Gelsomina arose, and, though bewildered by the tale of her cousin, and her own previous impressions, she stood resembling a meek statue of modesty, awaiting his approach. The Neapolitan was evidently struck by her beauty, and the simplicity of her air, but his brow was fixed, like that of a man who had steeled his feelings against deceit.

“Thou would’st see me?” he said.

“I had that wish, noble Signore, but—Annina—”

“Seeing another, thy mind hath changed.”

“Signore, it has.”

Don Camillo looked at her earnestly, and with manly regret.

“Thou art young for thy vocation—here is gold. Retire as thou camest.—But hold—dost thou know this Annina?”

“She is my mother’s sister’s daughter, noble Duca.”

“ Per Diana ! a worthy sisterhood ! Depart together, for I have no need of either. But mark me,” and as he spoke, Don Camillo took Annina by the arm, and led her aside, when he continued with a low but menacing voice—“ Thou see’st I am to be feared, as well as thy Councils. Thou canst not cross the threshold of thy father without my knowledge. If prudent, thou wilt teach thy tongue discretion. Do as thou wilt, I fear thee not ; but remember, prudence,”

Annina made an humble reverence, as if in acknowledgment of the wisdom of his advice, and taking the arm of her half-unconscious cousin, she again curtsied, and hurried from the room. As the presence of their master in his closet was known to them, none of the menials presumed to stop those who issued from the privileged room. Gelsomina, who was even more impatient than her wily companion to escape from a place she believed polluted, was nearly breathless when she reached the gondola. Its owner was in waiting on the steps, and in a moment the boat whirled away from a spot, which both of those it contained were, though for reasons so very different, glad to quit.

Gelsomina had forgotten her mask, in her hurry ; and the gondola was no sooner in the great canal than she put her face at the window of the pavilion in quest of the evening air. The rays of the moon fell upon her guileless eye, and a cheek that was now glowing, partly with offended pride, and partly with joy at her escape from a situation she felt to be so degrading. Her forehead was touched with a finger, and turning she saw the gondolier making a sign of caution. He then slowly lifted his mask.

“ Carlo !” had half burst from her lips, but another sign suppressed the cry.

Gelsomina withdrew her head, and, after her

beating heart had ceased to throb, she bowed her face and murmured thanksgivings, at finding herself, at such a moment, under the protection of one who possessed all her confidence.

The gondolier asked no orders for his direction. The boat moved on, taking the direction of the port, which appeared perfectly natural to the two females.

Annina supposed it was returning to the square, the place she would have sought had she been alone, and Gelsomina, who believed that he whom she called Carlo, toiled regularly as a gondolier for support, fancied, of course, that he was taking her to her ordinary residence.

But though the innocent can endure the scorn of the world, it is hard indeed to be suspected by those they love. All that Annina had told her of the character of Don Camillo and his associates came gradually across the mind of the gentle Gelsomina, and she felt the blood creeping to her temples, as she saw the construction her lover might put on her conduct. A dozen times did the artless girl satisfy herself with saying inwardly, "he knows me and will believe the best," and as often did her feelings prompt her to tell the truth. Suspense is far more painful, at such moments, than even vindication, which, in itself, is a humiliating duty to the virtuous. Pretending a desire to breathe the air, she left her cousin in the canopy. Annina was not sorry to be alone, for she had need to reflect on all the windings of the sinuous path on which she had entered.

Gelsomina succeeded in passing the pavilion, and in gaining the side of the gondolier.

"Carlo!"—she said, observing that he continued to row in silence.

"Gelsomina!"

"Thou hast not questioned me!"

"I know thy treacherous cousin, and can believe

thou art her dupe. The moment to learn the truth will come."

"Thou didst not know me, Carlo, when I called thee from the bridge?"

"I did not—Any fare that would occupy my time was welcome."

"Why dost thou call Annina treacherous?"

"Because Venice does not hold a more wily heart, or a falser tongue."

Gelsomina remembered the warning of Donna Florinda. Possessed of the advantage of blood, and that reliance which the inexperienced always place in the integrity of their friends, until exposure comes to destroy the illusion, Annina had found it easy to persuade her cousin of the unworthiness of her guests. But here was one who had all her sympathies, who openly denounced Annina herself. In such a dilemma the bewildered girl did what nature and her feelings suggested. She recounted, in a low but rapid voice, the incidents of the evening, and Annina's construction of the conduct of the females whom she had left behind in the prison.

Jacopo listened so intently that his oar dragged in the water.

"Enough," he said, when Gelsomina, blushing with her own earnestness to stand exculpated in his eyes, had done; "I understand it all. Distrust thy cousin, for the senate itself is not more false."

The pretended Carlo spoke cautiously, but in a firm voice. Gelsomina took his meaning, though wondering at what she heard, and returned to Annina within. The gondola proceeded, as if nothing had occurred.

CHAPTER IX.

“Enough.

I could be merry now: Hubert, I love thee;
Well, I'll not say what I intend for thee:
Remember.

King John.

JACOPO was deeply practised in the windings of Venetian deceit. He knew how unceasingly the eyes of the Councils, through their agents, were on the movements of those in whom they took an interest, and he was far from feeling all the advantage circumstances had seemingly thrown in his way. Annina was certainly in his power, and it was not possible that she had yet communicated the intelligence, derived from Gelsomina, to any of her employers. But a gesture, a look in passing the prison-gates, the appearance of duresse, or an exclamation, might give the alarm to some one of the thousand spies of the police. The disposal of Annina's person in some place of safety, therefore, became the first and the most material act. To return to the palace of Don Camillo, would be to go into the midst of the hirelings of the senate; and although the Neapolitan, relying on his rank and influence, had preferred this step, when little importance was attached to the detention of the girl, and when all she knew had been revealed, the case was altered, now that she might become the connecting link in the information necessary to enable the officers to find the fugitives.

The gondola moved on. Palace after palace was passed, and the impatient Annina thrust her head from a window to note its progress. They came among the shipping of the port, and her uneasiness sensibly increased. Making a pretext similar to that of Gelsomina, the wine-seller's daughter quitted the pavilion, to steal to the side of the gondolier.

“ I would be landed quickly at the water-gate of the doge’s palace,” she said, slipping a piece of silver into the hand of the boatman.

“ You shall be served, Bella Donna. But—Diamine ! I marvel that a girl of thy wit should not scent the treasures in yonder felucca ! ”

“ Dost thou mean the Sorrentine ? ”

“ What other padrone brings as well-flavored liquors within the Lido ! Quiet thy impatience to land, daughter of honest old Maso, and traffic with the padrone, for the comfort of us of the canals.”

“ How ! Thou knowest me then ? ”

“ To be the pretty wine-seller of the Lido. Corpo di Bacco ! Thou art as well known as the sea-wall itself, to us gondoliers.”

“ Why art thou masked ? thou canst not be Luigi ! ”

“ It is little matter whether I am called Luigi, or Enrico, or Giorgio—I am thy customer, and honor the shortest hair of thy eyebrows. Thou knowest, Annina, that the young patricians have their frolics, and they swear us gondoliers to keep secret till all danger of detection is over ; were any impertinent eyes following me, I might be questioned as to the manner of having passed the earlier hours.”

“ Methinks it would be better to have given thee gold, and to have sent thee at once to thy home.”

“ To be followed like a denounced Hebrew to my door. When I have confounded my boat with a thousand others, it will be time to uncover. Wilt thou to the Bella Sorrentina ? ”

“ Nay, 'tis not necessary to ask, since thou takest the direction of thine own will ! ”

The gondolier laughed and nodded his head, as if he would give his companion to understand that he was master of her secret wishes. Annina was hesitating in what manner she should make him

change his purpose, when the gondola touched the felucca's side.

"We will go up and speak to the padrone," whispered Jacopo.

"It is of no avail; he is without liquors."

"Trust him not—I know the man and his pretences."

"Thou forgettest my cousin."

"She is an innocent and unsuspecting child."

Jacopo lifted Annina, as he spoke, on the deck of the *Bella Sorrentina*, in a manner between gallantry and force, and leaped after her. Without pausing, or suffering her to rally her thoughts, he led her to the cabin stairs, which she descended, wondering at his conduct, but determined not to betray her own secret wrongs on the customs to a stranger.

Stefano Milano was asleep, in a sail, on deck. A touch aroused him, and a sign gave him to understand that the imaginary Roderigo stood before him.

"A thousand pardons, Signore," said the gaping mariner; "is the freight come?"

"In part only. I have brought thee a certain Annina Torti, the daughter of old Tommaso Torti, a wine-seller of the Lido."

"Santa Madre! does the senate think it necessary to send one like her from the city in secret?"

"It does—and it lays great stress on her detention. I have come hither with her, without suspicion of my object, and she has been prevailed on to enter thy cabin, under a pretence of some secret dealings in wines. According to our former understanding, it will be thy business to make sure of her presence."

"That is easily done," returned Stefano, stepping forward and closing the cabin-door, which he secured by a bolt. "She is alone, now, with the

image of our Lady, and a better occasion to repeat her aves cannot offer."

"This is well, if thou canst keep her so. It is now time to lift thy anchors, and to go beyond the tiers of the vessels with the felucca."

"Signore, there wants but five minutes for that duty, since we are ready."

"Then perform it, in all speed, for much depends on the management of this delicate duty. I will be with thee, anon. Hearkee, Master Stefano; take heed of thy prisoner, for the senate makes great account of her security."

The Calabrian made such a gesture, as one initiated uses, when he would express a confidence in his own shrewdness. While the pretended Roderigo re-entered his gondola, Stefano began to awaken his people. As the gondola entered the canal of San Marco, the sails of the felucca fell, and the low Calabrian vessel stole along the tiers towards the clear water beyond.

The boat quickly touched the steps of the water-gate of the palace. Gelsomina entered the arch, and glided up the Giant's Stairway, the route by which she had quitted the palace. The halberdier was the same that watched as she went out. He spoke to her, in gallantry, but offered no impediment to her entrance.

"Haste, noble ladies, hasten for the love of the Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Gelsomina, as she burst into the room in which Donna Violetta and her companion awaited her appearance. "I have endangered your liberty by my weakness, and there is not a moment to lose. Follow while you may, nor stop to whisper even a prayer."

"Thou art hurried and breathless," returned Donna Florinda; "hast thou seen the Duca di Sant' Agata?"

"Nay, question me not, but follow, noble dames."

Gelsomina seized the lamp, and casting a glance that appealed strongly to her visitors for tacit compliance, she led the way into the corridors. It is scarcely necessary to say that she was followed.

The prison was left in safety, the Bridge of Sighs was passed, for it will be remembered that Gelsomina was still mistress of the keys, and the party went swiftly by the great stairs of the palace into the open gallery. No obstruction was offered to their progress, and they all descended to the court, with the quiet demeanor of females who went out on their ordinary affairs.

Jacopo awaited at the water-gate. In less than a minute he was driving his gondola across the port, following the course of the felucca, whose white sail was visible in the moonlight, now bellying in the breeze, and now flapping as the mariners checked her speed. Gelsomina watched their progress for a moment in breathless interest, and then she crossed the bridge of the quay, and entered the prison by its public gate.

“Hast thou made sure of the old 'Maso's daughter?’” demanded Jacopo, on reaching the deck of the *Bella Sorrentina* again.

“She is like shifting ballast, Master Roderigo; first on one side of the cabin, and then on the other; but you see the bolt is undrawn.”

“Tis well: here is more of thy freight—thou hast the proper passes for the galley of the guard?”

“All is in excellent order, Signore; when was Stefano Milano out of rule in a matter of haste? Diamine! let the breeze come, and though the senate should wish us back again, it might send all its spirri after us in vain.”

“Excellent Stefano! fill thy sails, then, for our masters watch your movements, and set a value on your diligence.”

While the Calabrian complied, Jacopo assisted

the females to come up out of the gondola. In a moment the heavy yards swung off, wing and wing, and the bubbles that appeared to glance past the sides of the *Bella Sorrentina*, denoted her speed.

"Thou hast noble ladies in thy passengers," said Jacopo to the padrone, when the latter was released from the active duties of getting his vessel in motion; "and though policy requires that they should quit the city for a time, thou wilt gain favor by consulting their pleasures."

"Doubt me not, Master Roderigo; but thou forgettest that I have not yet received my sailing instructions; a felucca without a course, is as badly off as an owl in the sun."

"That in good time; there will come an officer of the republic to settle this matter with thee. I would not have these noble ladies know, that one like Annina is to be their fellow-passenger, while they are near the port; for they might complain of disrespect. Thou understandest, Stefano?"

"Cospetto! am I a fool? a blunderer? if so, why does the senate employ me? the girl is out of hearing, and there let her stay. As long as the noble dames are willing to breathe the night air, they shall have none of her company."

"No fear of them. The dwellers of the land little relish the pent air of thy cabin. Thou wilt go without the Lido, Stefano, and await my coming. If thou should'st not see me before the hour of one, bear away for the port of Ancona, where thou wilt get further tidings."

Stefano, who had often previously received his instructions from the imaginary Roderigo, nodded assent, and they parted. It is scarcely necessary to add, that the fugitives had been fully instructed in the conduct they were to maintain.

The gondola of Jacopo never flew faster, than he now urged it towards the land. In the constant

passage of the boats, the movements of one were not likely to be remarked ; and he found, when he reached the quay of the square, that his passing and repassing had not been observed. He boldly unmasked and landed. It was near the hour when he had given Don Camillo a rendezvous in the piazza, and he walked slowly up the smaller square, towards the appointed place of meeting.

Jacopo, as has been seen in an earlier chapter, had a practice of walking near the columns of granite in the first hours of the night. It was the vulgar impression that he waited there for custom in his bloody calling, as men of more innocent lives take their stands in places of mark. When seen on his customary stand, he was avoided by all who were chary of their character, or scrupulous of appearances.

The persecuted and yet singularly tolerated Bravo, was slowly pacing the flags on his way to the appointed place, unwilling to anticipate the moment, when a laquais thrust a paper into his hand, and disappeared as fast as legs would carry him. It has been seen that Jacopo could not read, for that was an age when men of his class were studiously kept in ignorance. He turned to the first passenger who had the appearance of being likely to satisfy his wishes, and desired him to do the office of interpreter.

He had addressed an honest shop-keeper of a distant quarter. The man took the scroll, and good-naturedly commenced reading its contents aloud. "I am called away, and cannot meet thee, Jacopo !" At the name of Jacopo, the tradesman dropped the paper and fled.

The Bravo walked slowly back again, towards the quay, ruminating on the awkward accident which had crossed his plans ; his elbow was touched, and a masker confronted him when he turned.

“Thou art Jacopo Frontoni?” said the stranger.

“None else.”

“Thou hast a hand to serve an employer, faithfully?”

“I keep my faith.”

“‘Tis well,—thou wilt find a hundred sequins in this sack.”

“Whose life is set against this gold?” asked Jacopo, in an under tone.

“Don Camillo Monforte.”

“Don Camillo Monforte!”

“The same: dost thou know the rich noble?”

“You have well described him, Signore. He would pay his barber this for letting blood.

“Do thy job thoroughly, and the price shall be doubled.”

“I want the security of a name. I know you not, Signore.”

The stranger looked cautiously around him, and raising his mask for an instant, he showed the countenance of Giacomo Gradenigo.

“Is the pledge sufficient?”

“Signore, it is. When must this deed be done?”

“This night.—Nay, this hour, even.”

“Shall I strike a noble of his rank in his palace—in his very pleasures?”

“Come hither, Jacopó, and thou shalt know more. Hast thou a mask?”

The Bravo signified his assent.

“Then keep thy face behind a cloud, for it is not in favor here, and seek thy boat. I will join thee.”

The young patrician, whose form was effectually concealed by his attire, quitted his companion, with a view of rejoining him anew, where his person should not be known. Jacopo forced his boat from among the crowd at the quay, and having entered the open space, between the tiers, he lay on his oar,

well knowing that he was watched, and that he would soon be followed. His conjecture was right, for in a few moments a gondola pulled swiftly to the side of his own, and two men in masks passed from the strange boat into that of the Bravo, without speaking.

“To the Lido,” said a voice, which Jacopo knew to be that of his new employer.

He was obeyed, the boat of Giacomo Gradenigo following at a little distance. When they were without the tiers, and consequently beyond the danger of being overheard, the two passengers came out of the pavilion, and made a sign to the Bravo to cease rowing.

“Thou wilt accept the service, Jacopo Fronto-
ni?” demanded the profligate heir of the old senator.

“Shall I strike the noble in his pleasures, Signore?”

“It is not necessary. We have found means to lure him from his palace, and he is now in thy power, with no other hope than that which may come from his single arm and courage. Wilt thou take the service?”

“Gladly, Signore—It is my humor to encounter the brave.”

“Thou wilt be gratified. The Neapolitan has thwarted me in my—shall I call it love, Hosea; or hast thou a better name?”

“Just Daniel! Signor Giacomo, you have no respect for reputations and surety! I see no necessity for a home thrust, Master Jacopo; but a smart wound, that may put matrimony out of the head of the Duca for a time at least, and penitence into its place, would be better—”

“Strike to the heart!” interrupted Giacomo. “It is the certainty of thy blow which has caused me to seek thee.”

“This is usurious vengeance, Signor Giacomo,”

returned the less resolute Jew. “ ‘T will be more than sufficient for our purposes, if we cause the Neapolitan to keep house for a month.”

“ Send him to his grave. Harkee, Jacopo, a hundred for thy blow—a second for insurance of its depth—a third, if the body shall be buried in the Orfano, so that the water will never give back the secret.”

“ If the two first must be performed, the last will be prudent caution,” muttered the Jew, who was a wary villain, and who greatly preferred such secondary expedients, as might lighten the load on his conscience. “ You will not trust, young Signore, to a smart wound ?”

“ Not a sequin. ‘T will be heating the fancy of the girl with hopes and pity. Dost thou accept the terms, Jacopo ?”

“ I do.”

“ Then row to the Lido. Among the graves of Hosea’s people—why dost thou pull at my skirts, Jew ! would’st thou hope to deceive a man of this character with a flimsy lie—among the graves of Hosea’s people thou wilt meet Don Camillo, within the hour. He is deluded by a pretended letter from the lady of our common pursuit, and will be alone, in the hopes of flight ; I trust to thee to hasten the latter, so far as the Neapolitan is concerned. Dost take my meaning ?”

“ Signore, it is plain.”

“ ‘T is enough. Thou knowest me, and can take the steps necessary for thy reward, as thou shalt serve me. Hosea, our affair is ended.”

Giacomo Gradenigo made a sign for his gondola to approach, and dropping a sack which contained the retainer in this bloody business, he passed into it, with the indifference of one, who had been accustomed to consider such means of attaining his object lawful. Not so Hosea—he was a rogue, rather than

a villain. The preservation of his money, with the temptation of a large sum which had been promised him, by both father and son, in the event of the latter's success with Violetta, were irresistible temptations to one who had lived contemned by those around him, and he found his solace for the ruthless attempt in the acquisition of those means of enjoyment, which are sought equally by Christian and Jew. Still his blood curdled, at the extremity to which Giacomo would push the affair, and he lingered to utter a parting word to the Bravo.

"Thou art said to carry a sure stiletto, honest Jacopo," he whispered. "A hand of thy practice must know how to maim, as well as to slay.—Strike the Neapolitan smartly, but spare his life. Even the bearer of a public dagger like thine, may not fare the worse, at the coming of Shilo, for having been tender of his strength, on occasion."

"Thou forgettest the gold, Hosea!"

"Father Abraham! what a memory am I getting, in my years! Thou sayest truth, mindful Jacopo; the gold shall be forthcoming, in any event—always provided that the affair is so managed as to leave my young friend, a successful adventurer with the heiress."

Jacopo made an impatient gesture, for at that moment he saw a gondolier pulling rapidly towards a private part of the Lido. The Hebrew joined his companion, and the boat of the Bravo darted ahead. It was not long ere it lay on the strand of the Lido. The steps of Jacopo were rapid, as he moved towards those proscribed graves, among which he had made his confession to the very man he was now sent to slay.

"Art thou sent to meet me?" demanded one, who started from behind a rising in the sands, but who took the precaution to bare his rapier as he appeared.

"Signor Duca, I am," returned the Bravo, unmasking.

"Jacopo!—This is even better than I had hoped! Hast thou tidings from my bride?"

"Follow, Don Camillo, and you shall quickly meet her."

Words were unnecessary to persuade, when there was such a promise. They were both in the gondola of Jacopo, and on their way to one of the passages through the Lido, which conducts to the gulf, before the Bravo commenced his explanation. This, however, was quickly made, not forgetting the design of Giacomo Gradenigo on the life of his auditor.

The felucca, which had been previously provided with the necessary pass, by the agents of the police, itself, had quitted the port under easy sail, by the very inlet, through which the gondola made its way into the Adriatic. The water was smooth, the breeze fresh from the land, and in short all things were favorable to the fugitives. Donna Violetta and her governess were leaning against a mast, watching with impatient eyes the distant domes, and the midnight beauty of Venice. Occasionally, strains of music came to their ears from the canals, and then a touch of natural melancholy crossed the feelings of the former, as she feared they might be the last sounds of that nature, she should ever hear from her native town. But unalloyed pleasure drove every regret from her mind when Don Camillo leaped from the gondola, and folded her in triumph to his heart.

There was little difficulty in persuading Stefano Milano to abandon, for ever, the service of the senate, for that of his feudal lord. The promises and commands of the latter were sufficient of themselves to reconcile him to the change, and all were convinced there was no time to lose. The felucca soon spread her canvas to the wind, and slid away from

the beach. Jacopo permitted his gondola to be towed a league to sea, before he prepared to re-enter it.

“ You will steer for Ancona, Signor Don Camillo,” said the Bravo, leaning on the felucca’s side, still unwilling to depart, “ and throw yourself, at once, under the protection of the Cardinal Secretary. If Stefano keep the sea, he may chance meet the galleys of the senate.”

“ Distrust us not—but thou, my excellent Jacopo—what wilt thou become, in their hands ?”

“ Fear not for me, Signore. God disposes of all, as he sees fit. I have told your eccellenza that I cannot yet quit Venice. If fortune favor me, I may still see your stout castle of Sant’ Agata.”

“ And none will be more welcome, within its secure walls ; I have much fear for thee, Jacopo !”

“ Signore, think not of it. I am used to danger—and to misery—and to hopelessness. I have known a pleasure, this night, in witnessing the happiness of two young hearts, that God, in his anger, has long denied me. Lady, the Saints keep you, and God, who is above all, shield you from harm !”

He kissed the hand of Donna Violetta, who, half ignorant still of his services, listened to his words, in wonder.

“ Don Camillo Monforte,” he continued, “ distrust Venice to your dying day. Let no promises—no hopes—no desire of increasing your honors, or your riches, ever tempt you to put yourself in her power. None know the falsehood of the state, better than I, and with my parting words I warn you to be wary !”

“ Thou speakest as if we were to meet no more, worthy Jacopo !”

The Bravo turned, and the action brought his features to the moon. There was a melancholy smile, in which deep satisfaction at the success of

the lovers was mingled with serious forebodings for himself.

"We are certain only of the past," he said, in a low voice.

Touching the hand of Don Camillo, he kissed his own and leaped hastily into his gondola. The fast was thrown loose, and the felucca glided away, leaving this extraordinary being, alone, in the waters. The Neapolitan ran to the taffrail, and the last he saw of Jacopo, the Bravo was rowing leisurely back towards that scene of violence and deception, from which he himself was so glad to have escaped.

CHAPTER X.

My limbs are bow'd, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine hath been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are bann'd, and barr'd—*forbidden fare.*

Prisoner of Chillon.

WHEN the day dawned on the following morning, the square of St. Mark was empty. The priests still chanted their prayers for the dead, near the body of old Antonio, and a few fishermen still lingered in and near the cathedral but half persuaded of the manner in which their companion had come to his end. But, as was usual at that hour of the day, the city appeared tranquil, for though a slight alarm had passed through the canals, at the movement of the rioters, it had subsided in that specious and distrustful quiet, which is, more or less, the unavoidable

consequence of a system that is not substantially based on the willing support of the mass.

Jacopo was again in the attic of the doge's palace, accompanied by the gentle Gelsomina. As they threaded the windings of the building, he recounted to the eager ear of his companion, all the details connected with the escape of the lovers; omitting, as a matter of prudence, the attempt of Giacomo Gradenigo on the life of Don Camillo. The unpractised and single-hearted girl heard him in breathless attention, the color of her cheek, and the changeful eye, betraying the force of her sympathies, at each turn in their hazardous adventure.

"And dost thou think they can yet escape from those up above?" murmured Gelsomina, for few in Venice would trust their voices, by putting such a question aloud. "Thou knowest the republic hath, at all times, its galleys in the Adriatic!"

"We have had thought of that, and the Calabrian is advised to steer for the mole of Ancona. Once within the States of the Church, the influence of Don Camillo and the rights of his noble wife will protect them. Is there a place here, whence we can look out upon the sea?"

Gelsomina led the Bravo into an empty room of the attic which commanded a view of the port, the Lido, and the waste of water beyond. The breeze came in strong currents, over the roofs of the town, and causing the masts of the port to rock, it lighted on the Lagunes, without the tiers of the shipping. From this point, to the barrier of sand, it was apparent, by the stooping sails and the struggles of the gondoliers who pulled towards the quay, that the air was swift. Without the Lido, itself, the element was shadowed and fitful, while farther in the distance, the troubled waters, with their crests of foam, sufficiently proved its power.

"Santa Maria be praised!" exclaimed Jacopo,

when his understanding eye had run over the near and distant view—"they are already far down the coast, and with a wind like this they cannot fail to reach their haven, in a few hours.—Let us go to the cell."

Gelsomina smiled, when he assured her of the safety of the fugitives, but her look saddened when he changed the discourse. Without reply, however, she did as he desired, and in a very few moments they were standing by the side of the prisoner's pallet. The latter did not appear to observe their entrance, and Jacopo was obliged to announce himself.

"Father!" he said, with that melancholy pathos which always crept into his voice when he addressed the old man, "it is I."

The prisoner turned, and though evidently much enfeebled, since the last visit, a wan smile gleamed on his wasted features.

"And thy mother, boy?" he asked, so eagerly as to cause Gelsomina to turn hastily aside.

"Happy, father—happy!"

"Happy without me?"

"She is ever with thee, in spirit, father. She thinks of thee in her prayers. Thou hast a saint for an intercessor, in my mother—father."

"And thy good sister?"

"Happy too—doubt it not, father. They are both patient and resigned."

"The senate, boy?"

"Is the same: soulless, selfish, and pretending!" answered Jacopo sternly; then turning away his face, in bitterness of heart, though without permitting the words to be audible, he cursed them.

"The noble Signori were deceived in believing me concerned in the attempt to rob their revenues," returned the patient old man; "one day they will see and acknowledge their error."

Jacopo made no answer, for, unlettered as he was, and curtailed of that knowledge which should be, and is, bestowed on all, by every paternal government, the natural strength of his mind had enabled him to understand, that a system, which on its face professed to be founded on the superior acquirements of a privileged few, would be the least likely to admit the fallacy of its theories, by confessing it could err.

"Thou dost the nobles injustice, son; they are illustrious patricians, and have no motive in oppressing one like me."

"None, father, but the necessity of maintaining the severity of the laws, which make them senators and you a prisoner."

"Nay, boy, I have known worthy gentlemen of the senate! There was the late signor Tiepolo, who did me much favor in my youth. But for this false accusation, I might now have been one of the most thriving of my craft in Venice."

"Father, we will pray for the soul of the Tiepolo."

"Is the senator dead?"

"So says a gorgeous tomb in the church of the Redentore."

"We must all die at last," whispered the old man, crossing himself. "Doge as well as patrician—patrician as well as gondolier.—Jaco—"

"Father!" exclaimed the Bravo, so suddenly as to interrupt the coming word, then kneeling by the pallet of the prisoner he whispered in his ear, "thou forgettest there is reason why thou should'st not call me by that name. I have told thee, often, that if thus called, my visits must stop."

The prisoner looked bewildered, for the failing of nature rendered that obscure which was once so evident to his mind. After gazing long at his son,

his eye wandered between him and the wall, and he smiled childishly.

“Wilt thou look, good boy, if the spider is come back?”

Jacopo groaned, but he rose to comply.

“I do not see it, father; the season is not yet warm.”

“Not warm! my veins feel heated to bursting. Thou forgettest this is the attic, and that these are the leads, and then the sun—oh! the sun! The illustrious senators do not bethink them of the pain of passing the bleak winter below the canals, and the burning summers beneath hot metal.”

“They think of nothing but their power,” murmured Jacopo—“that which is wrongfully obtained, must be maintained by merciless injustice—but why should we speak of this, father; hast thou all thy body needs?”

“Air—son, air!—give me of that air, which God has made for the meanest living thing.”

The Bravo rushed towards those fissures in the venerable but polluted pile, he had already striven to open, and with frantic force he endeavored to widen them with his hands. The material resisted, though blood flowed from the ends of his fingers, in the desperate effort.

“The door, Gelsomina, open wide the door!” he cried, turning away from the spot, exhausted with his fruitless exertions.

“Nay, I do not suffer now, my child—it is when thou hast left me, and when I am alone with my own thoughts, when I see thy weeping mother and neglected sister, that I most feel the want of air—are we not in the fervid month of August, son?”

“Father, it is not yet June.”

“I shall then have more heat to bear! God’s will be done, and blessed Santa Maria, his mother undefiled!—give me strength to endure it.”

The eye of Jacopo gleamed with a wildness, scarcely less frightful than the ghastly look of the old man, his chest heaved, his fingers were clenched, and his breathing was audible.

"No," he said, in a low, but in so determined a voice, as to prove how fiercely his resolution was set, "thou shalt not await their torments: arise, father, and go with me. The doors are open, the ways of the palace are known to me, in the darkest night, and the keys are at hand. I will find means to conceal thee until dark, and we will quit the accursed republic for ever."

Hope gleamed in the eye of the old captive, as he listened to this frantic proposal, but distrust of the means immediately altered its expression.

"Thou forgettest those up above, son."

"I think only of One truly above, father."

"And this girl—how canst thou hope to deceive her?"

"She will take thy place—she is with us in heart, and will lend herself to a seeming violence. I do not promise for thee, idly, kindest Gelsomina?"

The frightened girl, who had never before witnessed so plain evidence of desperation in her companion, had sunk upon an article of furniture, speechless. The look of the prisoner changed from one to the other, and he made an effort to rise, but debility caused him to fall backward, and not till then, did Jacopo perceive the impracticability, on many accounts, of what, in a moment of excitement, he had proposed. A long silence followed. The hard breathing of Jacopo gradually subsided, and the expression of his face changed to its customary, settled, and collected look.

"Father," he said, "I must quit thee; our misery draws near a close."

"Thou wilt come to me soon again?"

"If the saints permit—thy blessing, father."

The old man folded his hands above the head of Jacopo, and murmured a prayer. When this pious duty was performed, both the Bravo and Gelsomina busied themselves, a little time, in contributing to the bodily comforts of the prisoner, and then they departed in company.

Jacopo appeared unwilling to quit the vicinity of the cell. A melancholy presentiment seemed to possess his mind, that these stolen visits were soon to cease. After a little delay, however, they descended to the apartments below, and as Jacopo desired to quit the palace, without re-entering the prisons, Gelsomina prepared to let him out by the principal corridor.

"Thou art sadder than common, Carlo," she observed, watching with feminine assiduity his averted eye. "Methinks thou should'st rejoice in the fortunes of the Neapolitan, and of the lady of the Tiepolo."

"That escape is like a gleam of sunshine, in a wintry day. Good girl—but we are observed! why is yon spy on our movements?"

"'Tis a menial of the palace; they constantly cross us in this part of the building: come hither, if thou art weary. The room is little used, and we may again look out upon the sea."

Jacopo followed his mild conductor into one of the neglected closets of the second floor, where, in truth, he was glad to catch a glimpse of the state of things in the piazza, before he left the palace. His first look was at the water, which was still rolling southward, before the gale from the Alps. Satisfied with this prospect, he bent his eye beneath. At the instant, an officer of the republic issued from the palace gate, preceded by a trumpeter, as was usual, when there was occasion to make public proclamation of the senate's will. Gelsomina opened the casement, and both leaned forward to listen.

When the little procession had reached the front of the cathedral, the trumpet sounded, and the voice of the officer was heard.

“Whereas many wicked and ruthless assassinations have of late been committed on the persons of divers good citizens of Venice,”—he proclaimed—“the senate, in its fatherly care of all whom it is charged to protect, has found reason to resort to extraordinary means of preventing the repetition of crimes so contrary to the laws of God and the security of society. The Illustrious Ten therefore offer, thus publicly, a reward of one hundred sequins to him who shall discover the perpetrator of any of these most horrible assassinations; and, whereas, during the past night, the body of a certain Antonio, a well-known fisherman, and a worthy citizen, much esteemed by the patricians, has been found in the Lagunes, and, whereas, there is but too much reason to believe that he has come to his death by the hands of a certain Jacopo Frontoni, who has the reputation of a common Bravo, but who has been long watched, in vain, by the authorities, with the hope of detecting him in the commission of some one of the aforesaid horrible assassinations; now, all good and honest citizens of the republic are enjoined to assist the authorities in seizing the person of the said Jacopo Frontoni, even though he should take sanctuary: for Venice can no longer endure the presence of one of his sanguinary habits, and for the encouragement of the same, the senate, in its paternal care, offers the reward of three hundred sequins.” The usual words of prayer and sovereignty closed the proclamation.

As it was not usual for those who ruled so much in the dark, to make their intentions public, all near listened, with wonder and awe, to the novel procedure. Some trembled, lest the mysterious and much-dreaded power was about to exhibit itself;

while most found means of making their admiration of the fatherly interest of their rulers audible.

None heard the words of the officer with more feeling than Gelsomina. She bent her body far from the window, in order that not a syllable should escape her.

“Did’st thou hear, Carlo?” demanded the eager girl, as she drew back her head; “they proclaim, at last, money for the monster who has committed so many murders!”

Jacopo laughed; but to the ears of his startled companion the sounds were unnatural.

“The patricians are just, and what they do is right,” he said. “[REDACTED] are of illustrious birth, and cannot err! They will do their duty.”

“But here is no other duty than that they owe to God, and to the people.”

“I have heard of the duty of the people, but little is said of the senate’s.”

“Nay, Carlo, we will not refuse them credit when in truth they seek to keep the citizens from harm. This Jacopo is a monster, detested by all, and his bloody deeds have too long been a reproach to Venice. Thou hearest that the patricians are not niggard of their gold, when there is hope of his being taken.—Listen! they proclaim again!”

The trumpet sounded, and the proclamation was repeated between the granite columns of the Piazzetta, and quite near to the window occupied by Gelsomina and her unmoved companion.

“Why dost thou mask, Carlo?” she asked, when the officer had done; “it is not usual to be disguised, in the palace, at this hour.”

“They will believe it the doge, blushing to be an auditor of his own liberal justice, or they may mistake me for one of the Three, itself.”

“They go by the quay to the arsenal; thence they will take boat, as is customary, for the Rialto.”

“Thereby giving this redoubtable Jacopo timely notice to secrete himself! Your judges up above are mysterious when they should be open, and open when they should be secret. I must quit thee, Gelsomina; go, then, back to the room of thy father, and leave me to pass out by the court of the palace.”

“It may not be, Carlo—thou knowest the permission of the authorities—I have exceeded—why should I wish to conceal it from thee—but, it was not permitted to thee to enter at this hour.”

“And thou hast had the courage to transgress the leave, for my sake, Gelsomina?”

The abashed girl hung her head, and the color which glowed about her [REDACTED] was like the rosy light of her own Italy.

“Thou would’st have it so,” she said.

“A thousand thanks, dearest, kindest, truest Gelsomina; but doubt not my being able to leave the palace unseen. The danger was in entering. They who go forth, do it with the air of having authority.”

“None pass the halberdiers masked by day, Carlo, but they who have the secret word.”

The Bravo appeared struck with this truth, and there was great embarrassment expressed in his manner. The terms of his admittance were so well understood to himself, that he distrusted the expediency of attempting to get upon the quays by the prison, the way he had entered, since he had little doubt that his retreat would be intercepted by those who kept the outer gate, and who were probably, by this time, in the secret of his true character. It now appeared that egress by the other route was equally hazardous. He had not been surprised so much by the substance of the proclamation, as by the publicity the senate had seen fit to give to its policy,—and he had heard himself denounced, with a severe pang, it is true, but without terror. Still he had so many means of disguise, and the practice of personal con-

cealment was so general in Venice, that he had entertained no great distrust of the result until he now found himself in this awkward dilemma. Gelsomina read his indecision in his eye, and regretted that she should have caused him so much uneasiness.

"It is not so bad as thou seemest to think, Carlo," she observed; "they have permitted thee to visit thy father, at stated hours, and the permission is a proof that the senate is not without pity. Now that I, to oblige thy wishes, have forgotten one of their injunctions, they will not be so hard of heart as to visit the fault as a crime."

Jacopo gazed at her with pity, for well did he understand how little she knew of the real nature and wily policy of the state.

"It is time that we should part," he said, "lest thy innocence should be made to pay the price of my mistake. I am now near the public corridor, and must trust to my fortune to gain the quay."

Gelsomina hung upon his arm, unwilling to trust him to his own guidance in that fearful building.

"It will not do, Carlo; thou wilt stumble on a soldier, and thy fault will be known; perhaps they will refuse to let thee come again; perhaps altogether shut the door of thy poor father's cell."

Jacopo made a gesture for her to lead the way, and followed. With a beating but still lightened heart, Gelsomina glided along the passages, carefully locking each door, as of wont, behind her, when she had passed through it. At length they reached the well-known Bridge of Sighs. The anxious girl went on with a lighter step, when she found herself approaching her own abode, for she was busy in planning the means of concealing her companion in her father's rooms, should there be hazard in his passing out of the prison during the day.

"But a single minute, Carlo," she whispered, ap-

plying the key to the door which opened into the latter building—the lock yielded, but the hinges refused to turn. Gelsomina paled as she added—“They have drawn the bolts within!”

“No matter; I will go down by the court of the palace, and boldly pass the halberdier unmasked.”

Gelsomina, after all, saw but little risk of his being known by the mercenaries who served the doge, and, anxious to relieve him from so awkward a position, she flew back to the other end of the gallery. Another key was applied to the door by which they had just entered, with the same result. Gelsomina staggered back, and sought support against the wall.

“We can neither return nor proceed!” she exclaimed, frightened she knew not why.

“I see it all,” answered Jacopo, “we are prisoners on the fatal bridge.”

As he spoke, the Bravo calmly removed his mask, and showed the countenance of a man whose resolution was at its height.

“Santa Madre di Dio! what can it mean?”

“That we have passed here once too often, love. The council is tender of these visits.”

The bolts of both doors grated, and the hinges creaked at the same instant. An officer of the inquisition entered armed, and bearing manacles. Gelsomina shrieked, but Jacopo moved not limb or muscle, while he was fettered and chained.

“I too!” cried his frantic companion. “I am the most guilty—bind me—cast me into a cell, but let poor Carlo go.”

“Carlo!” echoed an officer, laughing unfeelingly.

“Is it such a crime to seek a father in his prison! They knew of his visits—they permitted them—he has only mistaken the hour.”

“Girl, dost thou know for whom thou pleadest?”

“For the kindest heart—the most faithful son in

Venice! Oh! if ye had seen him weep as I have done, over the sufferings of the old captive—if ye had seen his very form shivering in agony, ye would have pity on him!"

"Listen;" returned the officer, raising a finger for attention.

The trumpeter sounded on the bridge of St. Mark, immediately beneath them, and proclamation was again made, offering gold for the arrest of the Bravo.

"'Tis the officer of the republic, bidding for the head of one who carries a common stiletto," cried the half-breathless Gelsomina, who little heeded the ceremony at that instant; "he merits his fate."

"Then why resist it?"

"Ye speak without meaning!"

"Doting girl, this is Jacopo Frontoni!"

Gelsomina would have disbelieved her ears, but for the anguished expression of Jacopo's eye. The horrible truth burst upon her mind, and she fell lifeless. At that moment the Bravo was hurried from the bridge.

CHAPTER XI.

"Let us lift up the curtain, and observe
What passes in that chamber."

ROGERS.

THERE were many rumors, uttered in the fearful and secret manner which characterized the manners of the town, in the streets of Venice that day. Hundreds passed near the granite columns, as if they expected to see the Bravo occupying his accustomed stand, in audacious defiance of the pro-

clamation, for so long and so mysteriously, had he been permitted to appear in public, that men had difficulty in persuading themselves he would quit his habits so easily. It is needless to say that the vague expectation was disappointed. Much was also said, vauntingly, in behalf of the republic's justice, for the humbled are bold enough in praising their superiors; and he, who had been dumb for years, on subjects of a public nature, now found his voice like a fearless freeman.

But the day passed away without any new occurrence to call the citizens from their pursuits. The prayers for the dead were continued, with little intermission, and masses were said before the altars of half the churches, for the repose of the fisherman's soul. His comrades, a little distrustful, but greatly gratified, watched the ceremonies with jealousy and exultation singularly blended. Ere the night set in, again, they were among the most obedient of those the oligarchy habitually trod upon; for such is the effect of this species of domination, that it acquires a power to appease, by its flattery, the very discontents, created by its injustice. Such is the human mind: a factitious but deeply-seated sentiment of respect is created by the habit of submission, which gives the subject of its influence a feeling of atonement, when he who has long played the superior comes down from his stilts, and confesses the community of human frailties!

The square of St. Mark filled at the usual hour, the patricians deserted the Broglio as of wont, and the gaieties of the place were again uppermost, before the clock had struck the second hour of the night. Gondolas, filled with noble dames, appeared on the canals; the blinds of the palaces were raised for the admission of the sea-breeze;—and music began to be heard in the port, on the bridges, and under the balconies of the fair. The course of so-

ciety was not to be arrested, merely because the wronged were unavenged, or the innocent suffered.

There stood, then, on the grand canal, as there stand now, many palaces of scarcely less than royal magnificence. The reader has had occasion to become acquainted with one or two of these splendid edifices, and it has now become our duty to convey him, in imagination, to another.

The peculiarity of construction, which is a consequence of the watery site of Venice, gives the same general character to all the superior dwellings of that remarkable town. The house to which the thread of the narrative now leads us, had its water-gate, its vestibule, its massive marble stairs, its inner court, its magnificent suites of rooms above, its pictures, its lustres, and its floors of precious stones embedded in composition, like all those which we have already found it necessary to describe.

The hour was ten, according to our own manner of computing time. A small, but lovely family picture presented itself, deep within the walls of the patrician abode, to which we have alluded. There was a father, a gentleman who had scarce attained the middle age, with an eye in which spirit, intelligence, philanthropy, and, at that moment, paternal fondness were equally glowing. He tossed in his arms, with parental pride, a laughing urchin of some three or four years, who rioted in the amusement which brought him, and the author of his being, for a time, seemingly on a level. A fair Venetian dame, with golden locks, and glowing cheeks, such as Titian loved to paint her sex, reclined on a couch nigh by, following the movements of both, with the joint feelings of mother and wife, and laughing in pure sympathy with the noisy merriment of her young hope. A girl, who was the youthful image of herself, with tresses that fell to her waist, romped with a crowing infant, whose

age was so tender as scarcely to admit the uncertain evidence of its intelligence. Such was the scene as the clock of the piazza told the hour. Struck with the sound, the father set down the boy, and consulted his watch.

“Dost thou use thy gondola to-night, love?” he demanded.

“With thee, Paolo?”

“Not with me, dearest; I have affairs which will employ me until twelve!”

“Nay, thou art given to cast me off, when thy caprices are wayward.”

“Say not so. I have named to-night for an interview with my agent, and I know thy maternal heart too well, to doubt thy being willing to spare me for that time, while I look to the interests of these dear ones.”

The Donna Giulietta rang for her mantle and attendants. The crowing infant and the noisy boy were dismissed to their beds, while the lady and the eldest child descended to the gondola. Donna Giulietta was not permitted to go unattended to her boat, for this was a family in which the inclinations had fortunately seconded the ordinary calculations of interest, when the nuptial knot was tied. Her husband kissed her hand, fondly, as he assisted her into the gondola, and the boat had glided some distance from the palace, ere he quitted the moist stones of the water-gate.

“Hast thou prepared the cabinet for my friends?” demanded the Signor Soranzo, for it was the same senator who had been in company with the doge, when the latter went to meet the fishermen.

“Signore, si.”

“And the quiet, and the lights—as ordered?”

“Eccellenza, all will be done.”

“Thou hast placed seats for six—we shall be six.”

“ Signore, there are six armed chairs.”

“ Tis well: when the first of my friends arrive, I will join them.”

“ Eccellenza, there are already two cavaliers in masks, within.”

The Signor Soranzo started, again consulted his watch, and went hastily towards a distant, and very silent, part of the palace. He reached a small door unattended, and, closing it, found himself at once in the presence of those who evidently awaited his appearance.

“ A thousand pardons, Signori,” cried the master of the house; “ this is novel duty to me, at least—I know not what may be your honorable experience—and the time stole upon me unmarked. I pray for grace, Messires; future diligence shall repair the present neglect.”

Both the visitors were older men than their host, and it was quite evident by their hardened visages they were of much longer practice in the world. His excuses were received with courtesy, and, for a little time, the discourse was entirely of usage and convention.

“ We are in secret here, Signore?” asked one of the guests, after some little time had been wasted in this manner.

“ As the tomb. None enter here unbidden, but my wife, and she has, this moment, taken boat, for better enjoyment of the evening.”

“ The world gives you credit, Signor Soranzo, for a happy ménage. I hope you have duly considered the necessity of shutting the door, even against the Donna Giulietta to-night?”

“ Doubt me not, Signore; the affairs of St. Mark are paramount.”

“ I feel myself thrice happy, Signori, that in drawing a lot for the secret council, my good fortune hath given me so excellent colleagues. Believe me,

I have discharged this awful trust, in my day, in less agreeable company."

This flattering speech, which the wily old senator had made regularly to all with whom chance had associated him in the inquisition, during a long life, was well received, and it was returned with equal compliments.

"It would appear that the worthy Signor Alessandro Gradenigo was one of our predecessors," he continued, looking at some papers; for though the actual three were unknown, at the time being, to all, but a few secretaries and officers of the state, Venetian policy transmitted their names to their successors, as a matter of course,—"a noble gentleman, and one of great devotion to the state!"

The others assented, like men accustomed to speak with caution.

"We were about to have entered on our duties at a troublesome moment, Signori," observed another. "But it would seem that this tumult of the fishermen has already subsided. I understand the knaves had some reason for their distrust of the state!"

"It is an affair happily settled," answered the senior of the three, who was long practised in the expediency of forgetting all that policy required should cease to be remembered, after the object was attained. "The galleys must be manned, else would St. Mark quickly hang his head in shame."

The Signor Soranzo, who had received some previous instruction in his new duties, looked melancholy; but he, too, was merely the creature of a system.

"Is there matter of pressing import for our reflection?" he demanded.

"Signori, there is every reason to believe that the state has just sustained a grievous loss. Ye both well know the heiress of Tiepolo, by reputation at

least, though her retired manner of life may have kept you from her company."

"Donna Giulietta is eloquent in praise of her beauty," said the young husband.

"We had not a better fortune in Venice," rejoined the third inquisitor.

"Excellent in qualities, and better in riches, as she is, I fear we have lost her, Signori! Don Camillo Monforte, whom God protect until we have no future use for his influence! had come near to prevail against us; but just as the state baffled his well-laid schemes, the lady has been thrown by hazard into the hands of the rioters, since which time there is no account of her movements!"

Paolo Soranzo secretly hoped she was in the arms of the Neapolitan.

"A secretary has communicated to me the disappearance of the Duca di Sant' Agata, also," observed the third,—"nor is the felucca, usually employed in distant and delicate missions, any longer at her anchors."

The two old men regarded each other, as if the truth was beginning to dawn upon their suspicions. They saw that the case was hopeless, and as theirs was altogether a practical duty, no time was lost in useless regrets.

"We have two affairs which press," observed the elder.—"The body of the old fisherman must be laid quietly in the earth, with as little risk of future tumult, as may be—and we have this notorious Jacopo to dispose of."

"The latter must first be taken;" said the Signor Soranzo.

"That has been done already. Would you think it, Sirs! he was seized in the very palace of the doge!"

"To the block with him, without delay!"

The old men again looked at each other, and it

was quite apparent that, as both of them had been in previous councils, they had a secret intelligence, to which their companion was yet a stranger. There was also visible in their glances, something like a design to manage his feelings, before they came more openly to the graver practices of their duties.

“For the sake of blessed St. Mark, Signori, let justice be done openly in this instance!” continued the unsuspecting member of the Three. “What pity can the bearer of a common stiletto claim? and what more lovely exercise of our authority than to make public an act of severe and much-required justice?”

The old senators bowed to this sentiment of their colleague, which was uttered with the fervor of young experience, and the frankness of an upright mind; for there is a conventional acquiescence in received morals, which is permitted, in semblance at least, to adorn the most tortuous.

“It may be well, Signore Soranzo, to do this homage to the right,” returned the elder. “Here have been sundry charges found in different lions’ mouths, against the Neapolitan, Signor Don Camillo Monforte. I leave it to your wisdom, my illustrious colleagues, to decide on their character.”

“An excess of malice betrays its own origin,” exclaimed the least-practised member of the Inquisition. “My life on it, Signori, these accusations come of private spleen, and are unworthy of the state’s attention. I have consorted much with the young lord of Sant’ Agata, and a more worthy gentleman does not dwell among us.”

“Still hath he designs on the hand of old Tiepolo’s daughter!”

“Is it a crime in youth to seek beauty? He did great service to the lady, in her need, and that youth should feel these sympathies is nothing strange.”

"Venice hath her sympathies, as well as the youngest of us all, Signore."

"But Venice cannot wed the heiress!"

"True. St. Mark must be satisfied with playing the prudent father's part. You are yet young, Signore Soranzo, and the Donna Giulietta is of rare beauty! As life wears upon ye both, ye will see the fortunes of kingdoms, as well as families, differently. But we waste our breath uselessly in this matter, since our agents have not yet reported their success in the pursuit. The most pressing affair, just now, is the disposition of the Bravo. Hath his highness shown you the letter of the sovereign pontiff, in the question of the intercepted dispatches, Signore?"

"He hath. A fair answer was returned by our predecessors, and it must rest there."

"We will then look freely into the matter of Jacopo Frontoni. There will be necessity of our assembling in the chamber of the Inquisition, that we may have the prisoner confronted to his accusers. 'Tis a grave trial, Signori, and Venice would lose in men's estimation, were not the highest tribunal to take an interest in its decision."

"To the block with the villain!" again exclaimed the Signor Soranzo.

"He may haply meet with that fate, or even with the punishment of the wheel. A mature examination will enlighten us much on the course, which policy may dictate."

"There can be but one policy when the protection of the lives of our citizens is in question. I have never before felt impatience to shorten the life of man, but in this trial I can scarce brook delay."

"Your honorable impatience shall be gratified, Signor Soranzo; for, foreseeing the urgency of the case, my colleague, the worthy senator, who is joined with us in this high duty, and myself, have already issued the commands necessary to that object. The

hour is near, and we will repair to the chamber of the Inquisition in time to our duty."

The discourse then turned on subjects of a more general concern. This secret and extraordinary tribunal, which was obliged to confine its meetings to no particular place, which could decide on its decrees equally in the Piazza, or the palace, amidst the revelries of the masquerade, or before the altar; in the assemblies of the gay, or in their own closets, had of necessity much ordinary matter submitted to its inspection. As the chances of birth entered into its original composition,—and God hath not made all alike fit for so heartless a duty,—it sometimes happened, as in the present instance, that the more worldly of its members had to overcome the generous disposition of a colleague, before the action of the terrible machine could go on.

It is worthy of remark, that communities always establish a higher standard of justice and truth, than is exercised by their individual members. The reason is not to be sought for, since nature hath left to all a perception of that right, which is abandoned only under the stronger impulses of personal temptation. We commend the virtue we cannot imitate. Thus it is that those countries, in which public opinion has most influence, are always of the purest public practice. It follows as a corollary from this proposition, that a representation should be as real as possible, for its tendency will be inevitably to elevate national morals. Miserable, indeed, is the condition of that people, whose maxims and measures of public policy are below the standard of its private integrity, for the fact not only proves it is not the master of its own destinies, but the still more dangerous truth, that the collective power is employed in the fatal service of undermining those very qualities which are necessary to virtue, and which have enough to do, at all times, in resisting the attacks of

immediate selfishness. A strict legal representation of all its interests is far more necessary to a worldly than to a simple people, since responsibility, which is the essence of a free government, is more likely to keep the agents of a nation near to its own standard of virtue than any other means. The common opinion that a republic cannot exist, without an extraordinary degree of virtue in its citizens, is so flattering to our own actual condition, that we seldom take the trouble to inquire into its truth; but, to us, it seems quite apparent that effect is here mistaken for the cause. It is said, as the people are virtually masters in a republic, that the people ought to be virtuous to rule well. So far as this proposition is confined to degrees, it is just as true of a republic as of any other form of government. But kings do rule, and surely all have not been virtuous; and that aristocracies have ruled with the very minimum of that quality, the subject of our tale sufficiently shows. That, other things being equal, the citizens of a republic will have a higher standard of private virtue than the subjects of any other form of government, is true as an effect, we can readily believe, for responsibility to public opinion existing in all the branches of its administration, that conventional morality, which characterizes the common sentiment, will be left to act on the mass, and will not be perverted into a terrible engine of corruption, as is the case when factitious institutions give a false direction to its influence.

The case before us was in proof of the truth of what has here been said. The Signor Soranzo was a man of great natural excellence of character, and the charities of his domestic circle had assisted in confirming his original dispositions. Like others of his rank and expectations, he had, from time to time, made the history and polity of the self-styled republic his study, and the power of col-

lective interests and specious necessities had made him admit sundry theories, which, presented in another form, he would have repulsed with indignation. Still the Signor Soranzo was far from understanding the full effects of that system, which he was born to uphold. Even Venice paid that homage to public opinion, of which there has just been question, and held forth to the world but a false picture of her true state maxims. Still many of those which were too apparent to be concealed were difficult of acceptance, with one whose mind was yet untainted with practice; and the young senator rather shut his eyes on their tendency, or, as he felt their influence in every interest which environed him, but that of poor, neglected, abstract virtue, whose rewards were so remote, he was fain to seek out some palliative, or some specious and indirect good as the excuse for his acquiescence.

In this state of mind the Signor Soranzo was unexpectedly admitted a member of the Council of Three. Often, in the day-dreams of his youth, had he contemplated the possession of this very irresponsible power as the consummation of his wishes. A thousand pictures of the good he would perform had crossed his brain, and it was only as he advanced in life, and came to have a near view of the wiles which beset the best-intentioned, that he could bring himself to believe most of that which he meditated was impracticable. As it was, he entered into the council with doubts and misgivings. Had he lived in a later age, under his own system modified by the knowledge which has been a consequence of the art of printing, it is probable that the Signor Soranzo would have been a noble in opposition, now supporting with ardor some measure of public benevolence, and now yielding, gracefully, to the suggestions of a sterner policy, and always influenced by the positive advantages he was born to

possess, though scarcely conscious himself he was not all he professed to be. The fault, however, was not so much that of the patrician as that of circumstances, which, by placing interest in opposition to duty, lures many a benevolent mind into still greater weaknesses.

The companions of the Signor Soranzo, however, had a more difficult task to prepare him for the duties of the statesman, which were so very different from those he was accustomed to perform as a man, than they had anticipated. They were like two trained elephants of the east, possessing themselves all the finer instincts and generous qualities of the noble animal, but disciplined by a force quite foreign to their natural condition into creatures of mere convention, placed one on each side of a younger brother, fresh from the plains, and whom it was their duty to teach new services for the trunk, new affections, and haply the manner in which to carry, with dignity, the howdah of a Rajah.

With many allusions to their policy, but with no direct intimation of their own intention, the seniors of the council continued the conversation, until the hour for the meeting in the doge's palace drew nigh. They then separated, as privately as they had come together, in order that no vulgar eye might penetrate the mystery of their official character.

The most practised of the three appeared in an assembly of the patricians, which noble and beautiful dames graced with their presence, from which he disappeared in a manner to leave no clue to his motions. The other visited the death-bed of a friend, where he discoursed long and well, with a friar, of the immortality of the soul and the hopes of a Christian: when he departed, the godly man

bestowing his blessing, and the family he left being loud and eloquent in his praise.

The Signor Soranzo clung to the enjoyments of his own family circle until the last moment. The Donna Giulietta had returned, fresher and more lovely than ever, from the invigorating sea-breeze, and her soft voice, with the melodious laugh of his first-born, the blooming, ringlet-covered girl described, still rang in his ears, when his gondolier landed him beneath the bridge of the Rialto. Here he masked, and drawing his cloak about him, he moved with the current towards the square of St. Mark, by means of the narrow streets. Once in the crowd, there was little danger of impertinent observation. Disguise was as often useful to the oligarchy of Venice, as it was absolutely necessary to elude its despotism, and to render the town tolerable to the citizen. Paolo saw swarthy, bare-legged men of the Lagunes entering occasionally into the cathedral. He followed, and found himself standing near the dimly-lighted altar, at which masses were still saying for the soul of Antonio.

“ This is one of thy fellows ? ” he asked of a fisherman, whose dark eye glittered in that light, like the organ of a basilisk.

“ Signore, he was—a more honest, or a more just man, did not cast his net in the gulf.”

“ He has fallen a victim to his craft ? ”

“ Cospetto di Bacco ! none know in what manner he came by his end. Some say St. Mark was impatient to see him in paradise, and some pretend, he has fallen by the hand of a common Bravo, named Jacopo Frontoni.”

“ Why should a Bravo take the life of one like this ? ”

“ By having the goodness to answer your own question, Signore, you will spare me some trouble. Why should he, sure enough ? They say Jacopo is

revengeful, and that shame and anger at his defeat in the late regatta by one old as this, was the reason."

"Is he so jealous of his honor with the oar?"

"Diamine! I have seen the time when Jacopo would sooner die, than lose a race; but that was before he carried a stiletto. Had he kept to his oar, the thing might have happened, but once known for the hired blow, it seems unreasonable he should set his heart so strongly on the prizes of the canals."

"May not the man have fallen into the Lagunes, by accident?"

"No doubt, Signore. This happens to some of us daily; but then we think it wiser to swim to the boat, than to sink. Old Antonio had an arm in youth, to carry him from the quay to the Lido."

"But he may have been struck in falling, and rendered unable to do himself this good office."

"There would be marks to show this, were it true, Signore!"

"Would not Jacopo have used the stiletto?"

"Perhaps not, on one like Antonio. The gondola of the old man was found in the mouth of the Grand Canal, half a league from the body, and against the wind! we note these things, Signore, for they are within our knowledge."

"A happy night to thee, fisherman."

"A most happy night, eccellenza;" said the laborer of the Lagunes, gratified with having so long occupied the attention of one he rightly believed so much his superior. The disguised senator passed on. He had no difficulty in quitting the cathedral unobserved, and he had his private means of entering the palace, without attracting any impertinent eye to his movements. Here he quickly joined his colleagues of the fearful tribunal.

CHAPTER XII.

“There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor.”—Job.

THE manner in which the Council of Three held its more public meetings, if aught connected with that mysterious body could be called public, has already been seen. On the present occasion, there were the same robes, the same disguises, and the same officers of the inquisition, as in the scene related in a previous chapter. The only change was in the character of the judges, and in that of the accused. By a peculiar arrangement of the lamp, too, most of the light was thrown upon the spot it was intended the prisoner should occupy, while the side of the apartment on which the inquisitors sate, was left in a dimness that well accorded with their gloomy and secret duties. Previously to the opening of the door, by which the person to be examined was to appear, there was audible the clanking of chains, the certain evidence that the affair in hand was considered serious. The hinges turned, and the Bravo stood in presence of those unknown men who were to decide on his fate.

As Jacopo had often been before the council, though not as a prisoner, he betrayed neither surprise nor alarm at the black aspect of all his eye beheld. His features were composed though pale, his limbs immovable, and his mien decent. When the little bustle of his entrance had subsided, there reigned a stillness in the room.

“Thou art called Jacopo Frontoni?” said the secretary, who acted as the mouth-piece of the Three, on this occasion.

“I am.”

"Thou art the son of a certain Ricardo Fronto-
ni, a man well known as having been concerned in
robbing the republic's customs, and who is thought
to have been banished to the distant islands, or to
be otherwise punished?"

"Signore—or otherwise punished."

"Thou wert a gondolier in thy youth?"

"I was a gondolier."

"Thy mother is—"

"Dead;" said Jacopo, perceiving the other paus-
ed to examine his notes.

The depth of the tone, in which this word was
uttered, caused a silence, that the secretary did not
interrupt, until he had thrown a glance backward
at the judges.

"She was not accused of thy father's crime?"

"Had she been, Signore, she is long since beyond
the power of the republic."

"Shortly after thy father fell under the displea-
sure of the state, thou quittedst thy business of a
gondolier?"

"Signore, I did."

"Thou art accused, Jacopo, of having laid aside
the oar for the stiletto?"

"Signore, I am."

"For several years, the rumors of thy bloody
deeds have been growing in Venice, until, of late,
none have met with an untimely fate, that the blow
has not been attributed to thy hand?"

"This is too true, Signor Segretario—I would it
were not!"

"The ears of his highness, and of the Councils,
have not been closed to these reports, but they have
long attended to the rumors with the earnestness
which becomes a paternal and careful government.
If they have suffered thee to go at large, it hath
only been that there might be no hazard of sallying

the ermine of justice, with a premature and not sufficiently supported judgment."

Jacopo bent his head, but without speaking. A smile so wild and meaning, however, gleamed on his face at this declaration, that the permanent officer of the secret tribunal, he who served as its organ of communication, bowed nearly to the paper he held, as it might be to look deeper into his documents. Let not the reader turn back to this page in surprise, when he shall have reached the explanation of the tale, for mysticisms quite as palpable, if not of so ruthless a character, have been publicly acted by political bodies in his own times.

"There is now a specific and a frightful charge brought against thee, Jacopo Frontoni," continued the secretary; "and, in tenderness of the citizen's life, the dreaded council itself hath taken the matter in hand. Didst thou know a certain Antonio Vecchio, a fisherman here in our Lagunes?"

"Signore, I knew him well of late, and much regret that it was only of late."

"Thou knowest, too, that his body hath been found, drowned in the bay?"

Jacopo shuddered, signifying his assent merely by a sign. The effect of this tacit acknowledgment on the youngest of the three was apparent, for he turned to his companions, like one struck by the confession it implied. His colleagues made dignified inclinations in return, and the silent communication ceased.

"His death has excited discontent among his fellows, and its cause has become a serious subject of inquiry for the illustrious Council."

"The death of the meanest man in Venice should call forth the care of the patricians, Signore."

"Dost thou know, Jacopo, that thou art accused of being his murderer?"

"Signore, I do."

"It is said that thou camest among the gondoliers in the late regatta, and that, but for this aged fisherman, thou would'st have been winner of the prize?"

"In that, rumor hath not lied, Signore."

"Thou dost not, then, deny the charge!" said the examiner, in evident surprise.

"It is certain that but for the fisherman, I should have been the winner.

"And thou wished it, Jacopo?"

"Signore, greatly;" returned the accused, with a show of emotion, that had not hitherto escaped him. "I was a man condemned of his fellows, and the oar had been my pride, from childhood to that hour."

Another movement of the third inquisitor betrayed, equally, his interest and his surprise.

"Dost thou confess the crime?"

Jacopo smiled, but more in derision than with any other feeling.

"If the illustrious senators here present will unmask, I may answer that question, haply, with greater confidence;" he said.

"Thy request is bold and out of rule. None know the persons of the patricians who preside over the destinies of the state. Dost thou confess the crime?"

The entrance of an officer, in some haste, prevented a reply. The man placed a written report in the hands of the inquisitor in red, and withdrew. After a short pause, the guards were ordered to retire with their prisoner.

"Great senators!" said Jacopo, advancing earnestly towards the table, as if he would seize the moment to urge what he was about to say;— "Mercy! grant me your authority to visit one in the prisons, beneath the leads!—I have weighty rea-

sons for the wish, and I pray you, as men and fathers, to grant it!"

The interest of the two, who were consulting apart on the new intelligence, prevented them from listening to what he urged. The other inquisitor, who was the Signor Soranzo, had drawn near the lamp, anxious to read the lineaments of one so notorious, and was gazing at his striking countenance. Touched by the pathos of his voice, and agreeably disappointed in the lineaments he studied, he took upon himself the power to grant the request.

"Humor his wish," he said to the halberdiers; "but have him in readiness to reappear."

Jacopo looked his gratitude, but fearful that the others might still interfere to prevent his wish, he hurried from the room.

The march of the little procession, which proceeded from the chamber of the inquisition to the summer cells of its victims, was sadly characteristic of the place and the government.

It went through gloomy and secret corridors, that were hid from the vulgar eye, while thin partitions only separated it from the apartments of the doge, which, like the specious aspect of the state, concealed the nakedness and misery within, by their gorgeousness and splendor! On reaching the attic, Jacopo stopped, and turned to his conductors.

"If you are beings of God's forming," he said, "take off these clanking chains, though it be but for a moment."

The keepers regarded each other in surprise, neither offering to do the charitable office.

"I go to visit, probably for the last time," continued the prisoner, "a bed-ridden—I may say—a dying father, who knows nothing of my situation,—will ye that he should see me thus?"

The appeal which was made, more with the voice

and manner, than in the words, had its effect. A keeper removed the chains, and bade him proceed. With a cautious tread, Jacopo advanced, and when the door was opened he entered the room alone, for none there had sufficient interest in an interview between a common Bravo and his father, to endure the glowing warmth of the place, the while. The door was closed after him, and the room became dark.

Notwithstanding his assumed firmness, Jacopo hesitated, when he found himself so suddenly introduced to the silent misery of the forlorn captive. A hard breathing told him the situation of the pallet, but the walls, which were solid on the side of the corridor, effectually prevented the admission of light.

“Father!” said Jacopo, with gentleness.

He got no answer.

“Father!” he repeated in a stronger voice.

The breathing became more audible, and then the captive spoke.

“Holy Maria hears my prayers!” he said feebly.
“God hath sent thee, son, to close my eyes!”

“Doth thy strength fail thee, father?”

“Greatly—my time is come—I had hoped to see the light of the day again; to bless thy dear mother and sister—God’s will be done!”

“They pray for us both, father. They are beyond the power of the senate.”

“Jacopo,—I do not understand thee!”

“My mother and sister are dead; they are saints in Heaven, father.”

The old man groaned, for the tie of earth had not yet been entirely severed. Jacopo heard him murmuring a prayer, and he knelt by the side of his pallet.

“This is a sudden blow!” whispered the old man. “We depart together.”

"They are long dead, father."

"Why hast thou not told me this before, Jacopo?"

"Hadst thou not sorrows enough without this!—now that thou art about to join them, it will be pleasant to know, that they have so long been happy."

"And thou?—thou wilt be alone—give me thy hand,—poor Jacopo!"

The Bravo reached forth, and took the feeble member of his parent; it was clammy and cold.

"Jacopo," continued the captive, whose mind still sustained the body, "I have prayed thrice within the hour—once for my own soul—once for the peace of thy mother—lastly, for thee!"

"Bless thee, father!—bless thee!—I have need of prayer!"

"I have asked of God—favor in thy behalf. I have bethought me—of all thy love and care—of all thy devotion to my age and sufferings. When thou wert a child, Jacopo—tenderness for thee—tempted me to acts of weakness,—I trembled lest thy manhood might bring upon me—pain and repentance. Thou hast not known the yearnings—of a parent for his offspring—but thou hast well requited them. Kneel, Jacopo—that I may ask of God—once more, 'to remember thee.'"

"I am at thy side, father."

The old man raised his feeble arms, and with a voice, whose force appeared reviving, he pronounced a fervent and solemn benediction.

"The blessing of a dying parent will sweeten thy life—Jacopo," he added, after a pause, "and give peace to thy last moments."

"It will do the latter, father."

A rude summons at the door interrupted them.

"Come forth Jacopo," said a keeper;—"the Council seeks thee!"

Jacopo felt the convulsive start of his father, but he did not answer.

“Will they not leave thee—a few minutes longer?” whispered the old man—“I shall not keep thee long !”

The door opened, and a gleam from the lamp fell on the group in the cell. The keeper had the humanity to shut it again, leaving all in obscurity. The glance which Jacopo obtained, by that passing light, was the last look he had of his father’s countenance. Death was fearfully on it, but the eyes were turned in unutterable affection on his own.

“The man is merciful—he will not shut thee out !” murmured the parent.

“They cannot leave thee to die alone, father !”

“Son, I am with my God—yet I would gladly have thee by my side!—Didst thou say—thy mother and thy sister were dead ?”

“Dead !”

“Thy young sister, too ?”

“Father, both. They are saints in Heaven.”

The old man breathed thick, and there was silence. Jacopo felt a hand moving in the darkness, as if in quest of him. He aided the effort, and laid the member in reverence on his own head.

“Maria undefiled, and her son, who is God!—bless thee, Jacopo !” whispered a voice, that to the excited imagination of the kneeling Bravo, appeared to hover in the air. The solemn words were followed by a quivering sigh. Jacopo hid his face in the blanket, and prayed. After which there was deep quiet.

“Father !” he asked, trembling at his own smothered voice.

He was unanswered. Stretching out a hand, it touched the features of a corpse. With a firmness, that had the quality of desperation, he again bowed

his head, and uttered, fervently, a prayer for the dead.

When the door of the cell opened, Jacopo appeared to the keepers, with a dignity of air that belongs only to character, and which was heightened by the scene, in which he had just been an actor. He raised his hands, and stood immovable, while the manacles were replaced. This office done, they walked away together, in the direction of the secret chamber. It was not long ere all were again in their places, before the Council of Three.

“Jacopo Frontoni,” resumed the secretary, “thou art suspected of being privy to another dark deed, that hath had place of late, within our city. Hast thou any knowledge of a noble Calabrian, who hath high claim to the senate’s honors, and who hath long had his abode in Venice?”

“Signore, I have.”

“Hast thou had aught of concern with him?”

“Signore, yes.”

A movement of common interest made itself apparent among the auditors.

“Dost thou know where the Don Camillo Monforte is, at present?”

Jacopo hesitated. He so well understood the means of intelligence possessed by the Council, that he doubted how far it might be prudent to deny his connexion with the flight of the lovers. Besides, at that moment his mind was deeply impressed with a holy sentiment of truth.

“Canst thou say, why the young duca is not to be found in his palace?” repeated the secretary.

“Illustrissimo, he hath quitted Venice for ever.”

“How canst thou know this?—Would he make a confidant of a common Bravo?”

The smile which crossed the features of Jacopo was full of superiority; it caused the conscious

agent of the Secret Tribunal to look closely at his papers, like one who felt its power.

“Art thou his confidant—I ask again?”

“Signore, in this, I am.—I have the assurance from the mouth of Don Camillo Monforte himself, that he will not return.”

“This is impossible, since it would involve a loss of all his fair hopes and illustrious fortunes.”

“He consoled himself, Signore, with the possession of the heiress of Tiepolo’s love, and with her riches.”

Again there was a movement among the Three, which all their practised restraint, and the conventional dignity of their mysterious functions, could not prevent.

“Let the keepers withdraw;” said the inquisitor of the scarlet robe. So soon as the prisoner was alone with the Three, and their permanent officer, the examination continued; the senators themselves, trusting to the effect produced by their masks, and some feints, speaking as occasion offered.

“This is important intelligence that thou hast communicated, Jacopo,” continued he of the robe of flame. “It may yet redeem thy life, wert thou wise enough to turn it to account.”

“What would your eccellenza, at my hands? It is plain that the Council know of the flight of Don Camillo, nor will I believe, that eyes, which so seldom are closed, have not yet missed the daughter of the Tiepolo.”

“Both are true, Jacopo; but what hast thou to say of the means?” Remember, that as thou findest favor with the Council, thine own fate will be decided.”

The prisoner suffered another of those freezing gleams to cross his face, which invariably caused his examiners to bend their looks aside.

“The means of escape cannot be wanting to a

bold lover, Signore ;” he replied. “ Don Camillo is rich, and might employ a thousand agents, had he need of them.”

“ Thou art equivocating ; ‘t will be the worse for thee, that thou triflest with the Council—who are these agents ?”

“ He had a generous household, eccellenza ;—many hardy gondoliers, and servitors of all conditions.”

“ Of these we have nothing to learn. He hath escaped by other means—or art thou sure he hath escaped at all ?”

“ Signore, is he in Venice ?”

“ Nay, that we ask of thee. Here is an accusation, found in the lion’s mouth, which charges thee with his assassination.”

“ And the Donna Violetta’s too, eccellenza ?”

“ Of her, we have heard nothing. What answer dost make to the charge ?”

“ Signore, why should I betray my own secrets ?”

“ Ha ! art thou equivocating and faithless ? Remember that we have a prisoner beneath the leads, who can extract the truth from thee.”

Jacopo raised his form to such an altitude, as one might fancy to express the mounting of a liberated spirit. Still his eye was sad, and spite of an effort to the contrary, his voice melancholy.

“ Senators,” he said, “ your prisoner beneath the leads, is free.”

“ How ! thou art trifling, in thy despair !”

“ I speak truth. The liberation, so long delayed, hath come at last !”

“ Thy father——”

“ Is dead ; interrupted Jacopo, solemnly.

The two elder members of the Council looked at each other, in surprise, while their junior colleague listened with the interest of one, who was just entering on a noviciate of secret and embarrassing

duties. The former consulted together, and then they communicated as much of their opinions to the Signor Soranzo, as they deemed necessary to the occasion.

“Wilt thou consult thine own safety, Jacopo; and reveal all thou knowest of this affair of the Neapolitan?” continued the inquisitor, when this by-play was ended.

Jacopo betrayed no weakness at the menace implied by the words of the senator; but, after a moment’s reflection, he answered with as much frankness as he could have used at the confessional.

“It is known to you, illustrious senator,” he said, “that the state had a desire to match the heiress of Tiepolo, to its own advantage; that she was beloved of the Neapolitan noble; and that, as is wont, between young and virtuous hearts, she returned his love, as became a maiden of her high condition, and tender years. Is there any thing extraordinary in the circumstance, that two of so illustrious hopes should struggle to prevent their own misery? Signori, the night that old Antonio died, I was alone, among the graves of the Lido, with many melancholy and bitter thoughts, and life had become a burthen to me. Had the evil spirit which was then uppermost maintained its mastery, I might have died the death of a hopeless suicide. God sent Don Camillo Monforte, to my succor—praised be the immaculate Maria, and her blessed Son, for the mercy! it was there, I learned the wishes of the Neapolitan, and enlisted myself in his service. I swore to him, senators of Venice, to be true; to die in his cause, should it be necessary; and to help him to his bride. This pledge have I redeemed. The happy lovers are now in the states of the Church, and under the puissant protection of the cardinal secretary, Don Camillo’s mother’s brother.”

“Fool! why didst thou this? Hadst thou no thought for thyself?”

“Eccezza, but little; I thought more of finding a human bosom to pour out my sufferings to, than of your high displeasure. I have not known so sweet a moment in years, as that in which I saw the lord of Sant’ Agata fold his beautiful and weeping bride to his heart!”

The inquisitors were struck with the quiet enthusiasm of the Bravo, and surprise once more held them in suspense. At length, the elder of the three resumed the examination.

“Wilt thou impart the manner of this escape, Jacopo?” he demanded. “Remember thou hast still a life to redeem!”

“Signore, it is scarce worth the trouble: But to do you pleasure, nothing shall be concealed.”

Jacopo then recounted, in simple, and undisguised terms, the entire means employed by Don Camillo, in effecting his escape; his hopes, his disappointments, and his final success. In this narrative nothing was concealed, but the place in which the ladies had temporarily taken refuge, and the name of Gelsomina. Even the attempt of Giacomo Gradenigo on the life of the Neapolitan, and the agency of the Hebrew, were fully exposed. None listened to this explanation so intently as the young husband. Notwithstanding his public duties, his pulses quickened as the prisoner dwelt on the different chances of the lovers, and when their final union was proclaimed, he felt his heart bound with delight. On the other hand, his more practised colleagues heard the detail of the Bravo, with politic coolness. The effect of all factitious systems is to render the feelings subservient to expediency. Convention and fiction take place of passion and truth, and like the Mussulman with his doctrine of predestination, there is no one more acquiescent in defeat, than he who

has obtained an advantage in the face of nature and justice; his resignation being, in common, as perfect as his previous arrogance was insupportable. The two old senators perceived at once, that Don Camillo, and his fair companion, were completely beyond the reach of their power, and they instantly admitted the wisdom of making a merit of necessity. Having no farther occasion for Jacopo, they summoned the keepers, and dismissed him to his cell.

"It will be seemly to send letters of congratulation, to the cardinal secretary, on the union of his nephew, with so rich an heiress of our city," said the Inquisitor of the Ten, as the door closed on the retiring group. "So great an interest as that of the Neapolitan, should be propitiated."

"But should he urge the state's resistance to his hopes?" returned the Signor Soranzo, in feeble objection to so bold a scheme.

"We will excuse it as the act of a former council. These misconceptions are the unavoidable consequences of the caprices of liberty, Signore. The steed that ranges the plains, in the freedom of nature, cannot be held to perfect command, like the dull beast that draws the car. This is the first of your sittings, in the Three, but experience will show you, that excellent as we are in system, we are not quite perfect in practice. This is grave matter of the young Gradenigo, Signori!"

"I have long known his unworthiness," returned his more aged colleague. "It is a thousand pities that so honorable and so noble a patrician should have produced so ignoble a child. But neither the state, nor the city, can tolerate assassination."

"Would it were less frequent!" exclaimed the Signore Soranzo, in perfect sincerity.

"Would it were, indeed! There are hints in our secret information, which tend to confirm the charge

of Jacopo. Though long experience has taught us to put full faith in his reports."

"How—is Jacopo, then, an agent of the police?"

"Of that more at our leisure, Signor Soranzo. At present we must look to this attempt on the life of one protected by our laws."

The Three then entered into a serious discussion of the case of the two delinquents. Venice, like all despotic governments, had the merit of great efficiency in its criminal police, when it was disposed to exert it. Justice was sure enough in those instances, in which the interests of the government itself were not involved, or in which bribery could not well be used. As to the latter, through the jealousy of the state, and the constant agency of those who were removed from temptation, by being already in possession of a monopoly of benefits, it was by no means as frequent, as in some other communities, in which the affluent were less interested. The Signor Soranzo had now a fair occasion for the exercise of his generous feelings. Though related to the house of Gradenigo, he was not backward in decrying the conduct of its heir. His first impulses were to make a terrible example of the accused, and to show the world that no station brought with it, in Venice, impunity for crime. From this view of the case, however, he was gradually enticed by his companions, who reminded him that the law commonly made a distinction, between the intention and the execution of an offence. Driven from his first determination by the cooler heads of his colleagues, the young inquisitor next proposed that the case should be sent to the ordinary tribunals, for judgment. Instances had not been wanting, in which the aristocracy of Venice sacrificed one of its body to the seemliness of Justice; for when such cases were managed with discretion, they rather strengthened, than weaken'd their ascendancy. But the present

crime was known to be too common, to permit so lavish an expenditure of their immunities, and the old inquisitors opposed the wish of their younger colleague, with great plausibility, and with some show of reason. It was finally resolved that they should themselves decide on the case.

The next question was the degree of punishment. The wily senior of the council began by proposing a banishment for a few months, for Giacomo Gradenigo was already obnoxious to the anger of the state, on more accounts than one. But this punishment was resisted, by the Signor Soranzo, with the ardor of an uncorrupted and generous mind. The latter gradually prevailed, his companions taking care that their compliance should have the air of a concession to his arguments. The result of all this management was, that the heir of Gradenigo was condemned to ten years' retirement in the provinces, and Hosea to banishment for life. Should the reader be of opinion that strict justice was not meted out to the offenders, he should remember, that the Hebrew ought to be glad to have escaped as he did.

"We must not conceal this judgment, nor its motive," observed the Inquisitor of the Ten, when the affair was concluded. "The state is never a loser for letting its justice be known."

"Nor for its exercise, I should hope;" returned the Signor Soranzo. "As our affairs are ended for the night, is it your pleasures, Signori, that we return to our palaces?"

"Nay, we have this matter of Jacopo."

"Him may we, now, surely, turn over to the ordinary tribunals!"

"As you may decide, Signori; is this your pleasure?"

Both the others bowed assent, and the usual preparations were made for departure.

Ere the two seniors of the Council left the palace,

however, they held a long and secret conference together. The result was a private order to the criminal judge, and then they returned, each to his own abode, like men who had the approbation of their own consciences.

On the other hand, the Signor Soranzo hastened to his own luxurious and happy dwelling. For the first time, in his life, he entered it with a distrust of himself. Without being conscious of the reason, he felt sad, for he had taken the first step in that tortuous and corrupting path, which eventually leads to the destruction of all those generous and noble sentiments, which can only flourish apart from the sophistry and fictions of selfishness. He would have rejoiced to have been as light of heart as at the moment he handed his fair-haired partner into the gondola that night; but his head had pressed the pillow for many hours, before sleep drew a veil over the solemn trifling with the most serious of our duties, in which he had been an actor.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Art thou not guilty! No, indeed, I am not.”

ROGERS.

THE following morning brought the funeral of Antonio. The agents of the police took the precaution to circulate in the city, that the senate permitted this honor to the memory of the old fisherman, on account of his success in the regatta, and as some atonement for his unmerited and mysterious death. All the men of the Lagunes were assembled in the square at the appointed hour, in decent guise, flattered with the notice that their craft

received, and more than half disposed to forget their former anger in the present favor. Thus easy is it for those who are elevated above their fellow-creatures by the accident of birth, or by the opinions of a factitious social organization, to repair the wrongs they do in deeds, by small concessions of their conventional superiority.

Masses were still chanted for the soul of old Antonio before the altar of St. Mark. Foremost among the priests was the good Carmelite, who had scarce known hunger or fatigue, in his pious desire to do the offices of the church, in behalf of one, whose fate he might be said to have witnessed. His zeal, however, in that moment of excitement passed unnoticed by all, but those whose business it was to suffer no unusual display of character, nor any unwonted circumstance to have place, without attracting their suspicion. As the Carmelite finally withdrew from the altar, previously to the removal of the body, he felt the sleeve of his robe slightly drawn aside, and yielding to the impulse, he quickly found himself among the columns of that gloomy church, alone with a stranger.

“Father, thou hast shrived many a parting soul?” observed, rather than asked, the other.

“It is the duty of my holy office, son.”

“The state will note thy services; there will be need of thee when the body of this fisherman is committed to the earth.”

The monk shuddered, but making the sign of the cross, he bowed his pale face, in signification of his readiness to discharge the duty. At that moment the bearers lifted the body, and the procession issued upon the great square. First marched the usual lay underlings of the cathedral, who were followed by those who chanted the offices of the occasion. Among the latter the Carmelite hastened to take his station. Next came the corpse, without

a coffin, for that is a luxury of the grave, even now unknown to the Italians of old Antonio's degree. The body was clad in the holiday vestments of a fisherman, the hands and feet being naked. A cross lay on the breast; the gray hairs were blowing about in the air, and, in frightful adornment of the ghastliness of death, a bouquet of flowers was placed upon the mouth. The bier was rich in gilding and carving, another melancholy evidence of the lingering wishes and false direction of human vanity.

Next to this characteristic equipage of the dead walked a lad, whose brown cheek, half-naked body, and dark, roving, eye, announced the grandson of the fisherman. Venice knew when to yield gracefully, and the boy was liberated, unconditionally, from the galleys, in pity, as it was whispered, for the untimely fate of his parent. There was the aspiring look, the dauntless spirit, and the rigid honesty of Antonio, in the bearing of the lad; but these qualities were now smothered by a natural grief; and, as in the case of him, whose funeral escort he followed, something obscured by the rude chances of his lot. From time to time the bosom of the generous boy heaved, as they marched along the quay, taking the route of the arsenal; and there were moments that his lips quivered; grief threatening to overcome his manhood.

Still not a tear wetted his cheek, until the body disappeared from his view. Then nature triumphed, and straying from out the circle, he took a seat apart and wept, as one of his years and simplicity would be apt to weep, at finding himself a solitary wanderer in the wilderness of the world.

Thus terminated the incident of Antonio Vecchio, the fisherman, whose name soon ceased to be mentioned in that city of mysteries, except on the Lagunes, where the men of his craft long vaunted his

merit with the net, and the manner in which he bore away the prize from the best oars of Venice. His descendant lived and toiled, like others of his condition, and we will here dismiss him, by saying, that he so far inherited the native qualities of his ancestor, that he forbore to appear, a few hours later, in the crowd, which curiosity and vengeance drew into the Piazzetta.

Father Anselmo took boat to return to the canals, and when he landed at the quay of the smaller square, it was with the hope that he would now be permitted to seek those of whose fate he was still ignorant, but in whom he felt so deep an interest. Not so, however. The individual who had addressed him in the cathedral was, apparently, in waiting, and knowing the uselessness, as well as the danger of remonstrance, where the state was concerned, the Carmelite permitted himself to be conducted whither his guide pleased. They took a devious route, but it led them to the public prisons. Here the priest was shown into the keeper's apartment, where he was desired to wait a summons from his companion.

Our business now leads us to the cell of Jacopo. On quitting the presence of the Three, he had been remanded to his gloomy room, where he passed the night like others similarly situated. With the appearance of the dawn the Bravo had been led before those who ostensibly discharged the duties of his judges. We say ostensibly, for justice never was yet pure under a system in which the governors have an interest, in the least separated from that of the governed; for in all cases which involve the ascendancy of the existing authorities, the instinct of self-preservation is as certain to bias their decision, as that of life is to cause man to shun danger. If such is the fact in countries of milder sway, the reader will easily believe in its existence in a state

like that of Venice. As may have been anticipated, those who sat in judgment on Jacopo had their instructions, and the trial that he sustained was rather a concession to appearances than an homage to the laws. All the records were duly made, witnesses were examined, or said to be examined, and care was had to spread the rumor in the city, that the tribunals were at length occupied in deciding on the case of the extraordinary man, who had so long been permitted to exercise his bloody profession with impunity, even in the centre of the canals. During the morning, the credulous tradesmen were much engaged in recounting to each other the different flagrant deeds that, in the course of the last three or four years, had been imputed to his hand. One spoke of the body of a stranger that had been found near the gaming-houses, frequented by those who visited Venice. Another recalled the fate of the young noble, who had fallen by the assassin's blow even on the Rialto, and another went into the details of a murder, which had deprived a mother of her only son, and the daughter of a patrician of her love. In this manner, as one after another contributed to the list, a little group, assembled on the quay, enumerated no less than five-and-twenty lives, which were believed to have been taken, by the hand of Jacopo, without including the vindictive and useless assassination of him whose funeral rites had just been celebrated. Happily, perhaps, for his peace of mind, the subject of all these rumors, and of the maledictions which they drew upon his head, knew nothing of either. Before his judges he had made no defence whatever, firmly refusing to answer their interrogatories.

"Ye know what I have done, Messires," he said, haughtily. "And what I have not done, ye know. As for yourselves, look to your own interests."

When again in his cell, he demanded food, and

ate tranquilly, though with moderation. Every instrument which could possibly be used against his life, was then removed, his irons were finally and carefully examined, and he was left to his thoughts. It was in this situation that the prisoner heard the approach of footsteps to his cell. The bolts turned, and the door opened. The form of a priest appeared between him and the day. The latter, however, held a lamp, which, as the cell was again shut and secured, he placed on the low shelf that held the jug and loaf of the prisoner.

Jacopo received his visitor calmly, but with the deep respect of one who reverenced his holy office. He arose, crossed himself, and advanced as far as the chains permitted, to do him honor.

“Thou art welcome, father,” he said; “in cutting me off from earth, the Council, I see, does not wish to cut me off from God.”

“That would exceed their power, son. He who died for them, shed his blood for thee, if thou wilt not reject his grace. But—Heaven knows I say it with reluctance! thou art not to think that one of thy sins, Jacopo, can have hope without deep and heartfelt repentance!”

“Father, have any?”

The Carmelite started, for the point of the question, and the tranquil tones of the speaker, had a strange effect in such an interview.

“Thou art not what I had supposed thee, Jacopo!” he answered. “Thy mind is not altogether obscured in darkness, and thy crimes have been committed against the consciousness of their enormity.”

“I fear this is true, reverend monk.”

“Thou must feel their weight in the poignancy of grief—in the—” Father Anselmo stopped, for a sob at that moment, apprized them that they were not alone. Moving aside, in a little alarm, the ac-

tion discovered the figure of the shrinking Gelso-mina, who had entered the cell, favored by the keepers, and concealed by the robes of the Carmelite. Jacopo groaned, when he beheld her form, and turning away, he leaned against the wall.

“Daughter, why art thou here—and who art thou?” demanded the monk.

“Tis the child of the principal keeper,” said Jacopo, perceiving that she was unable to answer, “one known to me, in my frequent adventures in this prison.”

The eye of father Anselmo wandered from one to the other. At first its expression was severe, and then, as it saw each countenance in turn, it became less unkind, until it softened, at the exhibition of their mutual agony.

“This comes of human passions!” he said, in a tone between consolation and reproof. “Such are ever the fruits of crime.”

“Father,” said Jacopo, with earnestness, “I may deserve the word; but the angels in Heaven are scarce purer than this weeping girl!”

“I rejoice to hear it. I will believe thee, unfortunate man, and glad am I, that thy soul is relieved from the sin of having corrupted one so youthful.”

The bosom of the prisoner heaved, while Gelso-mina shuddered.

“Why hast thou yielded to the weakness of nature, and entered the cell?” asked the good Carmelite, endeavoring to throw into his eye a reproof, that the pathos and kindness of his tones contradicted. “Didst thou know the character of the man thou loved?”

“Immaculate Maria!” exclaimed the girl—“no—no—no!”

“And now that thou hast learned the truth, surely thou art no longer the victim of wayward fancies!”

The gaze of Gelsomina was bewildered, but anguish prevailed over all other expression. She bowed her head, partly in shame, but more in sorrow, without answering.

"I know not, children, what end this interview can answer," continued the monk—"I am sent hither to receive the last confession of a Bravo, and surely, one who has so much cause to condemn the deception he has practised, would not wish to hear the details of such a life?"

"No—no—no—" murmured Gelsomina again, enforcing her words with a wild gesture of the hand.

"It is better, father, that she should believe me all that her fancy can imagine as monstrous," said Jacopo, in a thick voice: "she will then learn to hate my memory."

Gelsomina did not speak, but the negative gesture was repeated frantically.

"The heart of the poor child hath been sorely touched," said the Carmelite, with concern. "We must not treat so tender a flower rudely. Hearken to me, daughter, and consult thy reason, more than thy weakness."

"Question her not, father;—let her curse me, and depart."

"Carlo!" shrieked Gelsomina.

A long pause succeeded. The monk perceived that human passion was superior to his art, and that the case must be left to time; while the prisoner maintained within himself, a struggle more fierce than any which it had yet been his fate to endure. The lingering desires of the world conquered, and he broke silence.

"Father," he said, advancing to the length of his chain, and speaking both solemnly, and with dignity, "I had hoped—I had prayed that this unhappy but innocent creature might have turned from her own

weakness with loathing, when she came to know that the man she loved was a Bravo.—But I did injustice to the heart of woman!—Tell me, Gelsomina, and as thou valuest thy salvation, deceive me not—canst thou look at me without horror?"

Gelsomina trembled, but she raised her eyes, and smiled on him as the weeping infant returns the earnest and tender regard of its mother. The effect of that glance on Jacopo was so powerful, that his sinewy frame shook, until the wondering Carmelite heard the clanking of his chains.

"'Tis enough," he said, struggling to command himself, "Gelsomina, thou shalt hear my confession. Thou hast long been mistress of one great secret, none other shall be hid from thee."

"Antonio?" gasped the girl.—"Carlo! Carlo! what had that aged fisherman done, that thy hand should seek his life?"

"Antonio!" echoed the monk; dost thou stand charged with his death, my son?"

"It is the crime for which I am condemned to die."

The Carmelite sank upon the stool of the prisoner, and sat motionless, looking with an eye of horror, from the countenance of the unmoved Jacopo, to that of his trembling companion. The truth began to dawn upon him, though his mind was still enveloped in the web of Venetian mystery.

"Here is some horrible mistake!" he whispered. "I will hasten to thy judges and undeceive them."

The prisoner smiled calmly, as he reached out a hand to arrest the zealous movement of the simple Carmelite.

"'Twill be useless," he said; "it is the pleasure of the Three, that I should suffer for old Antonio's death."

"Then wilt thou die unjustly!—I am a witness that he fell by other hands."

"Father!" shrieked Gelsomina, "oh! repeat the words—say that Carlo could not do the cruel deed!"

"Of that murder, at least, is he innocent."

"Gelsomina!" said Jacopo, struggling to stretch forth his arms towards her, and yielding to a full heart, "and of every other!"

A cry of wild delight burst from the lips of the girl, who in the next instant lay senseless on his bosom.

We draw the veil before the scene that followed. Near an hour must pass before we can again remove it. The cell then exhibited a group in its centre, over which the lamp shed its feeble light, marking the countenances of the different personages with strong tints and deep shadows, in a manner to bring forth all the force of Italian expression. The Carmelite was seated on the stool, while Jacopo and Gelsomina knelt beside him. The former of the two last was speaking earnestly, while his auditors caught each syllable that issued from his lips, as if interest in his innocence were still stronger than curiosity.

"I have told you, father," he continued, "that a false accusation of having wronged the customs, brought my unhappy parent under the senate's displeasure, and that he was many years an innocent inhabitant of one of these accursed cells, while we believed him in exile, among the islands. At length we succeeded in getting such proof before the Council, as ought to have satisfied the patricians of their own injustice. I am afraid that when men pretend that the chosen of the earth exercise authority, they are not ready to admit their errors, for it would be proof against the merit of their system. The Council delayed a weary time to do us justice—so long, that my poor mother sank under her sufferings. My sister, a girl of Gelsomina's years, followed her soon—for the only reason given by the state, when

pressed for proof, was the suspicion, that one who sought her love, was guilty of the crime for which my unhappy father perished."

"And did they refuse to repair their injustice?" exclaimed the Carmelite.

"They could not do it, father, without publishing their fallibility. The credit of certain great patriots was concerned, and I fear there is a morality in these Councils, which separates the deed of the man from those of the senators, putting policy before justice."

"This may be true, son; for when a community is grounded on false principles, its interests must, of necessity, be maintained by sophisms. God will view this act with a different eye!"

"Else would the world be hopeless, father! After years of prayers and interest, I was, under a solemn oath of secrecy, admitted to my father's cell. There was happiness in being able to administer to his wants—in hearing his voice—in kneeling for his blessing. Gelsomina was then a child approaching womanhood. I knew not their motive, though after thoughts left it no secret, and I was permitted to see my father through her means. When they believed that I was sufficiently caught in their toils, I was led into that fatal error which has destroyed my hopes, and brought me to this condition."

"Thou hast affirmed thy innocence, my son!"

"Innocent of shedding blood, father, but not of lending myself to their artifices. I will not weary you, holy monk, with the history of the means by which they worked upon my nature. I was sworn to serve the state, as its secret agent, for a certain time. The reward was to be my father's freedom. Had they taken me in the world, and in my senses, their arts would not have triumphed; but a daily witness of the sufferings of him who had given me life, and who was now all that was left me in the

world, they were too strong for my weakness. They whispered to me of racks and wheels, and I was shown paintings of dying martyrs, that I might understand the agony they could inflict. Assassinations were frequent, and called for the care of the police—in short, father”—Jacopo hid his face in the dress of Gelsomina,—“I consented to let them circulate such tales as might draw the eye of the public on me. I need not add, that he who lends himself to his own infamy, will soon attain his object.”

“With what end was this miserable falsehood invented?”

“Father, I was applied to as to a public Bravo, and my reports, in more ways than one, answered their designs. That I saved some lives is at least a consolation for the error, or crime, into which I fell!”

“I understand thee, Jacopo. I have heard that Venice did not hesitate to use the ardent, and brave, in this manner. Holy St. Mark! can deceit like this be practised under the sanction of thy blessed name!”

“Father, it is, and more. I had other duties, connected with the interests of the republic, and of course I was practised in their discharge. The citizens marvelled that one like me should go at large, while the vindictive and revengeful took the circumstance as a proof of address. When rumor grew too strong for appearances, the Three took measures to direct it to other things; and when it grew too faint for their wishes, it was fanned. In short, for three long and bitter years did I pass the life of the damned—sustained only by the hope of liberating my father, and cheered by the love of this innocent!”

“Poor Jacopo, thou art to be pitied! I will remember thee in my prayers.”

“And thou, Gelsomina?”

The keeper's daughter did not answer. Her ears had drunk in each syllable that fell from his lips, and now that the whole truth began to dawn on her mind, there was a bright radiance in her eye, that appeared almost supernatural to those who witnessed it.

"If I have failed in convincing thee, Gelsomina," continued Jacopo, "that I am not the wretch I seemed, would that I had been dumb!"

She stretched a hand towards him, and dropping her head on his bosom, wept.

"I see all thy temptations, poor Carlo," she said, softly; "I know how strong was thy love for thy father."

"Dost thou forgive me, dearest Gelsomina, for the deception on thy innocence?"

"There was no deception—I believed thee a son ready to die for his father, and I find thee what I thought thee."

The good Carmelite regarded this scene with eyes of interest and indulgence.—Tears wetted his cheeks.

"Thy affection for each other, children," he said, "is such as angels might indulge.—Has thy intercourse been of long date?"

"It has lasted years, father."

"And thou, daughter, hast been with Jacopo in the cell of his parent?"

"I was his constant guide, on these holy errands, father."

The monk mused deeply. After a silence of several minutes, he proceeded to the duties of his holy office. Receiving the spiritual confession of the prisoner, he gave the absolution, with a fervor, which proved how deeply his sympathies were enlisted in behalf of the youthful pair. This duty done, he gave Gelsomina his hand, and there was a

mild confidence in his countenance, as he took leave of Jacopo.

“We quit thee,” he said; “but be of heart, son. I cannot think that even Venice will be deaf to a tale like thine! Trust first to thy God—and, believe that neither this faithful girl nor I will abandon thee, without an effort.”

Jacopo received this assurance like one accustomed to exist in extreme jeopardy. The smile which accompanied his own adieux, had in it as much of incredulity, as of melancholy. It was, however, full of the joy of a lightened heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Your heart
Is free, and quick with virtuous wrath to accuse
Appearances; and views a criminal
In innocence’s shadow.”

Werner.

THE Carmelite and Gelsomina found the keepers in waiting, and when they quitted the cell, its door was secured for the night. As they had no farther concerns with the jailers, they passed on unquestioned. But when the end of the corridor, which led towards the apartments of the keeper, was reached, the monk stopped.

“Art thou equal to a great effort, in order that the innocent shall not die?” he suddenly asked, though with a solemnity that denoted the influence of a high and absorbing motive.

“Father!”

“I would know if thy love for the youth can sus-

tain thee in a trying scene; for without this effort he will surely perish!"

"I would die to save Jacopo a pang!"

"Deceive not thyself, daughter!—Canst thou forget thy habits, overstep the diffidence of thy years and condition; stand and speak fearlessly, in the presence of the great and dreaded?"

"Reverend Carmelite, I speak daily, without fear, though not without awe, to one more to be dreaded than any in Venice."

The monk looked in admiration at the gentle being, whose countenance was glowing with the mild resolution of innocence and affection, and he motioned for her to follow.

"We will go, then, before the proudest and the most fearful of earth, should there be occasion," he resumed. "We will do our duty to both parties; to the oppressor and the oppressed, that the sin of omission lie not on our souls."

Father Anselmo, without further explanation, led the obedient girl into that part of the palace, which was known to be appropriated to the private uses of the titular head of the republic.

The jealousy of the Venetian patricians, on the subject of their doge, is matter of history. He was, by situation, a puppet in the hands of the nobles, who only tolerated his existence, because the theory of their government required a seeming agent in the imposing ceremonies that formed part of their specious system, and in their intercourse with other states. He dwelt, in his palace, like the queen-bee in the hive, pampered and honored to the eye, but in truth devoted to the objects of those who alone possess the power to injure, and perhaps we might add, like the insect named, known for consuming more than a usual portion of the fruits of the common industry.

Father Anselmo was indebted to his own decis-

ion, and to the confidence of his manner, in reaching the private apartments of a prince, thus secluded and watched. He was permitted to pass by various sentinels, who imagined, from his holy calling and calm step, that he was some friar employed in his usual and privileged office. By this easy, quiet, method did the Carmelite and his companion penetrate to the very antechamber of the sovereign, a spot that thousands had been defeated in attempting to reach, by means more elaborate.

There were merely two or three drowsy inferior officers of the household in waiting. One arose, quickly, at the unexpected appearance of these unknown visitors, expressing, by the surprise and the confusion of his eye, the wonder into which he was thrown by so unlooked-for guests.

“His highness waits for us, I fear?” simply observed father Anselmo, who had known how to quiet his concern, in a look of passive courtesy.

“Santa Maria! holy father, you should know best, but——”

“We will not lose more time in idle words, son, when there has already been this delay—show us to the closet of his highness.”

“It is forbidden to usher any, unannounced, into the presence——”

“Thou seest this is not an ordinary visit.—Go, inform the doge that the Carmelite he expects, and the youthful maiden, in whom his princely bosom feels so parental an interest, await his pleasure.”

“His highness has then commanded——”

“Tell him, moreover, that time presses; for the hour is near when innocence is condemned to suffer.”

The usher was deceived by the gravity and assurance of the monk. He hesitated, and then throwing open a door, he showed the visitors into an inner room, where he requested them to await his

return. After this, he went on the desired commission, to the closet of his master.

It has already been shown that the reigning doge, if such a title can be used of a prince who was merely a tool of the aristocracy, was a man advanced in years. He had thrown aside the cares of the day, and, in the retirement of his privacy, was endeavoring to indulge those human sympathies that had so little play in the ordinary duties of his factitious condition, by holding intercourse with the mind of one of the classics of his country. His state was laid aside for lighter ease and personal freedom. The monk could not have chosen a happier moment for his object, since the man was undefended by the usual appliances of his rank, and he was softened by communion with one who had known how to mould and temper the feelings of his readers at will. So entire was the abstraction of the doge, at the moment, that the usher entered unheeded, and had stood in respectful attention to his sovereign's pleasure, near a minute before he was seen.

"What wouldst thou, Marco?" demanded the prince, when his eye rose from the page.

"Signore," returned the officer, using the familiar manner in which those nearest to the persons of princes are permitted to indulge—"here are the reverend Carmelite, and the young girl, in waiting."

"How sayest thou?—a Carmelite, and a girl!"

"Signore, the same. Those whom your highness expects."

"What bold pretence is this!"

"Signore, I do but repeat the words of the monk. 'Tell his highness,' said the father, 'that the Carmelite he wishes to see, and the young girl, in whose happiness his princely bosom feels so parental an interest, await his pleasure.'"

There passed a glow, in which indignation was

brighter than shame, over the wasted cheek of the old prince, and his eye kindled.

“And this to me—even in my palace!”

“Pardon, Signore.—This is no shameless priest, like so many that disgrace the tonsure. Both monk and girl have innocent and harmless looks, and I do suspect your highness may have forgotten.”

The bright spots disappeared from the prince’s cheeks, and his eye regained its paternal expression. But age, and experience in his delicate duties, had taught the Doge of Venice caution. He well knew that memory had not failed him, and he at once saw that a hidden meaning lay concealed beneath an application so unusual. There might be a device of his enemies, who were numerous and active, or, in truth, there might be some justifiable motive to warrant the applicant in resorting to a measure so hardy.

“Did the Carmelite say more, good Marco?” he asked, after deep reflection.

“Signore, he said there was great urgency, as the hour was near when the innocent might suffer. I doubt not that he comes with a petition in behalf of some young indiscreet, for there are said to be several young nobles arrested for their follies in the carnival. The female may be a sister disguised.”

“Bid one of thy companions come hither; and, when I touch my bell, do thou usher these visitors to my presence.”

The attendant withdrew, taking care to pass into the antechamber, by doors that rendered it unnecessary to show himself, too soon, to those who expected his return. The second usher quickly made his appearance, and was immediately dispatched in quest of one of the Three, who was occupied with important papers, in an adjoining closet. The senator was not slow to obey the summons, for he ap-

peared there as a friend of the prince, having been admitted publicly, and with the customary honors.

“Here are visitors of an unusual character, Signore,” said the doge, rising to receive him whom he had summoned in precaution to himself, “and I would have a witness of their requests.”

“Your highness does well to make us of the senate share your labors; though if any mistaken opinion of the necessity has led you to conceive it important to call a counsellor each time a guest enters the palace——”

“It is well, Signore,” mildly interrupted the prince, touching the bell. “I hope my opportunity has not deranged you. But here come those I expect.”

Father Anselmo and Gelsomina entered the closet together. The first glance convinced the doge that he received strangers. He exchanged looks with the member of the secret council, and each saw in the other’s eye, that the surprise was mutual.

When fairly in the presence, the Carmelite threw back his cowl, entirely exposing the whole of his ascetic features, while Gelsomina, awed by the rank of him who received them, shrunk abashed, partly concealed by his robes.

“What means this visit?” demanded the prince, whose finger pointed to the shrinking form of the girl, while his eye rested steadily on that of the monk, “and that unusual companion? Neither the hour, nor the mode, is customary.”

Father Anselmo stood before the Venetian sovereign for the first time. Accustomed, like all of that region, and more especially in that age, to calculate his chances of success warily, before venturing to disburthen his mind, the monk fastened a penetrating look on his interrogator.

“Illustrious prince,” he said, “we come petitioners for justice. They who are thus commissioned had

need be bold, lest they do their own character, and their righteous office, discredit."

"Justice is the glory of St. Mark, and the happiness of his subjects. Thy course, father, is not according to established rules, and wholesome restraints, but it may have its apology—name thy errand."

"There is one in the cells, condemned of the public tribunals, and he must die with the return of day, unless your princely authority interfere to save him."

"One condemned of the tribunals may merit his fate."

"I am the ghostly adviser of the unhappy youth, and in the execution of my sacred office, I have learned that he is innocent."

"Didst thou say, condemned of the common judges, father?"

"Sentenced to die, highness, by a decree of the criminal tribunals."

The prince appeared relieved. So long as the affair had been public, there was at least reason to believe he might indulge his love of the species, by listening farther, without offence to the tortuous policy of the state. Glancing his eye at the motionless inquisitor, as if to seek approbation, he advanced a step nearer to the Carmelite, with increasing interest in the application.

"By what authority, reverend priest, dost thou impeach the decision of the judges?" he demanded.

"Signore, as I have just said, in virtue of knowledge gained in the exercise of my holy office. He has laid bare his soul to me, as one whose feet were in the grave; and, though offending, like all born of woman, towards his God, he is guiltless as respects the state."

"Thinkest thou, father, that the law would ever reach its victim, were we to listen only to self-accu-

sations? I am old, monk, and have long worn that troublesome cap," pointing to the horned bonnet, which lay near his hand, the symbol of his state, "and in my day, I do not recall the criminal that has not fancied himself the victim of untoward circumstances."

"That men apply this treacherous solace to their consciences, one of my vocation has not to learn. Our chief task is to show the delusion of those, who, while condemning their own sins, by words of confession and self-abasement, make a merit of humility; but, Doge of Venice, there is still a virtue in the sacred rite I have this evening been required to perform, which can overcome the mounting of the most exalted spirit. Many attempt to deceive themselves, at the confessional, while, by the power of God, few succeed."

"Praised be the blessed mother and the incarnate son, that it is so!" returned the prince, struck by the mild faith of the monk, and crossing himself, reverently. "Father, thou hast forgotten to name the condemned?"

"It is a certain Jacopo Frontoni;—a reputed bravo."

The start, the changing color, and the glance of the prince of Venice, were full of natural surprise.

"Callest thou the bloodiest stiletto that ever disgraced the city, the weapon of a reputed bravo! The arts of the monster have prevailed over thy experience, monk!—the true confession of such a wretch, would be but a history of bloody and revolting crimes."

"I entered his cell with this opinion, but I left it convinced that the public sentiment has done him wrong. If your highness will deign hear his tale, you will think him a fit subject for your pity, rather than for punishment."

"Of all the criminals of my reign, this is the

last, in whose favor I could have imagined there was aught to be said!—Speak, freely, Carmelite; for curiosity is as strong as wonder."

So truly did the Doge give utterance to his feelings, that he momentarily forgot the presence of the inquisitor, whose countenance might have shown him that the subject was getting to be grave.

The monk ejaculated a thanksgiving, for it was not always easy, in that city of mystery, to bring truth to the ears of the great. When men live under a system of duplicity, more or less of the quality gets interwoven with the habits of the most ingenuous, although they may remain, themselves, unconscious of the taint. Thus father Anselmo, as he proceeded with the desired explanation, touched more tenderly on the practices of the state, and used more of reserve in alluding to those usages and opinions, which one of his holy calling and honest nature, under other circumstances, would have fearlessly condemned.

"It may not be known to one of your high condition, sovereign prince," resumed the Carmelite, "that an humble, but laborious mechanic of this city, a certain Francesco Frontoni, was long since condemned for frauds against the republic's revenue. This is a crime St. Mark never fails to visit with his heavy displeasure, for when men place the goods of the world before all other considerations, they mistake the objects which have brought them together in social union."

"Father, thou wert speaking of a certain Francesco Frontoni?"

"Highness, such was his name. The unhappy man had taken into his confidence and friendship, one, who, pretending to his daughter's love, might appear to be the master of his secrets. When this false suitor stood on the verge of detection, for offences against the customs, he laid a snare of de-

ception, which, while he was permitted to escape, drew the anger of the state on his too confiding friend. Francesco was condemned to the cells, until he might reveal facts which never had an existence."

"This is a hard fate, reverend friar, could it be but proved!"

"'Tis the evil of secrecy and intrigue, great doge, in managing the common interests!"

"Hast thou more of this Francesco, monk?"

"His history is short, Signore; for at the age when most men are active in looking to their welfare, he was pining in a prison."

"I remember to have heard of some such accusation—but it occurred in the reign of the last doge—did it not, father?"

"And he has endured to near the close of the reign of this, highness!"

"How! The senate, when apprized of the error of its judgment, was not slow to repair the wrong!"

The monk regarded the prince earnestly, as if he would make certain whether the surprise he witnessed was not a piece of consummate acting. He felt convinced that the affair was one of that class of acts, which, however oppressive, unjust, and destructive of personal happiness, had not sufficient importance to come before them, who govern under systems which care more for their own preservation, than for the good of the ruled. "Signor Doge," he said, "the state is discreet in matters that touch its own reputation. There are reasons that I shall not presume to examine, why the cell of poor Francesco was kept closed, long after the death and confession of his accuser left his innocence beyond dispute."

The prince mused, and then he bethought him to consult the countenance of his companion. The marble of the pilaster, against which he leaned, was

not more cold and unmoved than the face of the inquisitor. The man had learned to smother every natural impulse in the assumed and factitious duties of his office.

“And what has this case of Francesco to do with the execution of the Bravo?” demanded the doge, after a pause, in which he had in vain struggled to assume the indifference of his counsellor.

“That I shall leave this prison-keeper’s daughter to explain—stand forth, child, and relate what you know, remembering, if you speak before the prince of Venice, that you also speak before the King of Heaven!”

Gelsomina trembled, for one of her habits, however supported by her motives, could not overcome a nature so retiring without a struggle. But faithful to her promise, and sustained by her affection for the condemned, she advanced a step, and stood no longer concealed by the robes of the Carmelite.

“Thou art the daughter of the prison-keeper?” asked the prince mildly, though surprise was strongly painted in his eye.

“Highness, we are poor, and we are unfortunate; we serve the state for bread.”

“Ye serve a noble master, child. Dost thou know aught of this Bravo?”

“Dread sovereign, they that call him thus, know not his heart! One more true to his friends, more faithful to his word, or more suppliant with the saints, than Jacopo Frontoni, is not in Venice!”

“This is a character which art might appropriate, even to a bravo. But we waste the moments.—What have these Frontoni, in common?”

“Highness, they are father and son. When Jacopo came to be of an age to understand the misfortunes of his family, he wearied the senators with applications in his father’s behalf, until they commanded the door of the cell to be secretly opened to a child so

pious. I well know, great prince, that they who rule cannot have all-seeing eyes, else could this wrong never have happened. But Francesco wasted years in cells, chill and damp in winter, and scorching in summer, before the falsehood of the accusation was known. Then, as some relief to sufferings so little merited, Jacopo was admitted."

"With what object, girl?"

"Highness, was it not in pity? They promised too, that in good time, the service of the son should buy the father's liberty. The patricians were slow to be convinced, and they made terms with poor Jacopo, who agreed to undergo a hard service, that his father might breathe free air, before he died."

"Thou dealest in enigmas."

"I am little used, great doge, to speak in such a presence, or on such subjects. But this I know, that for three weary years hath Jacopo been admitted to his father's cell, and that those up above consented to the visits; else would my father have denied them. I was his companion in the holy act, and will call the blessed Maria and the saints——"

"Girl, didst thou know him for a bravo?"

"Oh! Highness, no. To me he seemed a dutiful child, fearing God and honoring his parent. I hope never to feel another pang, like that which chilled my heart, when they said, he I had known as the kind Carlo, was hunted in Venice as the abhorred Jacopo! But it is passed, the Mother of God be praised!"

"Thou art betrothed to this condemned man?"

The color did not deepen on the cheek of Gelosmina, at this abrupt question, for the tie between her and Jacopo had become too sacred, for the ordinary weaknesses of her sex.

"Highness, yes; we were to be married, should it have pleased God, and those great senators who

have so much influence over the happiness of the poor, to permit it."

"And thou art still willing, knowing the man, to pledge thy vows to one like Jacopo!"

"It is because I do know him to be as he is, that I most reverence him, great doge. He has sold his time and his good name to the state, in order to save his imprisoned father, and in that I see nothing to frighten one he loves."

"This affair needs explanation, Carmelite. The girl has a heated fancy, and she renders that obscure she should explain."

"Illustrious prince, she would say that the republic was content to grant the son the indulgence of visiting the captive, with some encouragement of his release, on condition that the youth might serve the police by bearing a bravo's reputation."

"And for this incredible tale, father, you have the word of a condemned criminal!"

"With the near view of death before his eyes. There are means of rendering truth evident, familiar to those who are often near the dying penitents, that are unknown to those of the world. In any case, Signore, the matter is worthy of investigation."

"In that thou art right. Is the hour named for the execution?"

"With the morning light, prince."

"And the father?"

"Is dead."

"A prisoner, Carmelite!"

"A prisoner, Prince of Venice."

There was a pause.

"Hast thou heard of the death of one named Antonio?"

"Signore, yes. By the sacred nature of my holy office, do I affirm that of this crime is Jacopo innocent! I shrived the fisherman."

The doge turned away, for the truth began to dawn upon him, and the flush which glowed on his aged cheek, contained a confession that might not be observed by every eye. He sought the glance of his companion, but his own expression of human feeling was met by the disciplined features of the other, as light is coldly repelled from polished stone.

“ Highness !” added a tremulous voice.

“ What would’st thou, child ?”

“ There is a God for the republic, as well as for the gondolier ! Your highness will turn this great crime from Venice ?”

“ Thou art of plain speech, girl !”

“ The danger of Carlo has made me bold. You are much beloved by the people, and none speak of you, that they do not speak of your goodness, and of your desire to serve the poor. You are the root of a rich and happy family, and you will not —nay, you cannot if you would, think it a crime for a son to devote all to a father. You are our father, and we have a right to come to you, even for mercy—but, highness, I ask only for justice.”

“ Justice is the motto of Venice.”

“ They who live in the high favor of providence do not always know what the unhappy undergo. It has pleased God to afflict my own poor mother, who has griefs that, but for her patience and Christian faith, would have been hard to bear. The little care I had it in my power to show, first caught Jacopo’s eye, for his heart was then full of the duty of the child. Would your highness consent to see poor Carlo, or to command him to be brought hither, his simple tale would give the lie to every foul slander they have dared to say against him.

“ It is unnecessary—it is unnecessary. Thy faith in his innocence, girl, is more eloquent than any words of his can prove.”

A gleam of joy irradiated the face of Gelsomina, who turned eagerly to the listening monk, as she continued—

“His highness listens,” she said, “and we shall prevail!” Father, they menace in Venice, and alarm the timid, but they will never do the deed we feared. Is not the God of Jacopo my God, and your God?—the God of the senate, and of the doge?—of the Council, and of the republic? I would the secret members of the Three could have seen poor Jacopo, as I have seen him, coming from his toil, weary with labor, and heart-broken with delay, enter the winter or the summer cell—chilling or scorching as the season might be—and struggling to be cheerful, that the falsely accused might not feel a greater weight of misery.—Oh! venerable and kind prince, you little know the burthen that the feeble are often made to carry, for to you life has been sunshine; but there are millions who are condemned to do that they lothe, that they may not do that they dread.”

“Child, thou tell’st me nothing new.”

“Except in convincing you, highness, that Jacopo is not the monster they would have him. I do not know the secret reasons of the councils for wishing the youth to lend himself to a deception that had nigh proved so fatal; but all is explained, we have naught now to fear. Come, father; we will leave the good and just doge to go to rest, as suits his years, and we will return to gladden the heart of Jacopo with our success, and thank the blessed Maria for her favor.”

“Stay!” exclaimed the half-stifled old man. “Is this true that thou tellest me, girl:—Father, can it be so?”

“Signore, I have said all that truth and my conscience have prompted.”

The prince seemed bewildered, turning his look

from the motionless girl to the equally immovable member of the Three.

“Come hither, child,” he said, his voice trembling as he spoke. “Come hither, that I may bless thee.” Gelsomina sprang forward, and knelt at the feet of her sovereign. Father Anselmo never uttered a clearer or more fervent benediction than that which fell from the lips of the prince of Venice. He raised the daughter of the prison-keeper, and motioned for both his visitors to withdraw. Gelsomina willingly complied, for her heart was already in the cell of Jacopo, in the eagerness to communicate her success; but the Carmelite lingered to cast a look behind, like one better acquainted with the effects of worldly policy, when connected with the interests of those who pervert governments to the advantage of the privileged. As he passed through the door, however, he felt his hopes revive, for he saw the aged prince, unable any longer to suppress his feelings, hastening towards his still silent companion, with both hands extended, eyes moistening with tears, and a look that betrayed the emotions of one anxious to find relief in human sympathies.

CHAPTER XVI.

“On—on—
It is our knell, or that of Venice.—On.”
Marino Faliero.

ANOTHER morning called the Venetians to their affairs. Agents of the police had been active in preparing the public mind, and as the sun rose above the narrow sea, the squares began to fill. There were present the curious citizen in his cloak

and cap, bare-legged laborers in wondering awe, the circumspect Hebrew in his gaberdine and beard, masked gentlemen, and many an attentive stranger from among the thousands who still frequented that declining mart. It was rumored that an act of retributive justice was about to take place, for the peace of the town and the protection of the citizen. In short, curiosity, idleness, and revenge, with all the usual train of human feelings, had drawn together a multitude eager to witness the agonies of a fellow-creature.

The Dalmatians were drawn up, near the sea, in a manner to inclose the two granite columns of the Piazzetta. Their grave and disciplined faces fronted inwards, towards the African pillars, those well-known land-marks of death. A few grim warriors, of higher rank, paced the flags before the troops, while a dense crowd filled the exterior space. By special favor, more than a hundred fishermen were grouped within the armed men, witnesses that their class had revenge. Between the lofty pedestals of St. Theodore and the winged lion lay the block and ax, the basket and the saw-dust; the usual accompaniments of justice in that day. By their side, stood the executioner.

At length a movement in the living mass drew every eye towards the gate of the palace. A murmur arose, the multitude waved, and a small body of the Sbirri came into view. Their steps were swift, like the march of destiny. The Dalmatians opened to receive these ministers of fate into their bosom, and closing their ranks again appeared to preclude the world, with its hopes, from the condemned. On reaching the block between the columns, the Sbirri fell off in files, waiting at a little distance, while Jacopo was left before the engines of death, attended by his ghostly counsellor, the

Carmelite. The action left them open to the gaze of the throng.

Father Anselmo was in the usual attire of a bare-footed friar of his order. The cowl of the holy man was thrown back, exposing his mortified lineaments, and self-examining eye, to those around. The expression of his countenance was that of bewildered uncertainty, relieved by frequent, but fitful, glimmerings of hope. Though his lips moved constantly in prayer, his looks wandered, by an irrepressible impulse, from one window of the doge's palace to another. He took his station near the condemned, however, and thrice crossed himself, fervently.

Jacopo had tranquilly placed his person before the block. His head was bare, his cheek colorless, his throat and neck uncovered to the shoulders, his body, in its linen, and the rest of his form, was clad in the ordinary dress of a gondolier. He kneeled, with his face bowed to the block, repeated a prayer, and rising he faced the multitude, with dignity and composure. As his eye moved slowly over the array of human countenances by which he was environed, a hectic glowed on his features, for not one of them all betrayed sympathy in his sufferings. His breast heaved, and those nearest to his person thought the self-command of the miserable man was about to fail him. The result disappointed expectation. There was a shudder, and the limbs settled into repose.

“Thou hast looked in vain, among the multitude, for a friendly eye?” said the Carmelite, whose attention had been drawn to the convulsive movement.

“None here have pity for an assassin.”

“Remember thy Redeemer, son. He suffered ignominy and death, for a race that denied his God-head, and derided his sorrows.”

Jacopo crossed himself, and bowed his head, in reverence.

“Hast thou more prayers to repeat, father?” demanded the chief of the Sbirri; he who was particularly charged with the duty of the hour. “Though the illustrious councils are so sure in justice, they are merciful to the souls of sinners.”

“Are thy orders peremptory?” asked the monk, unconsciously fixing his eye, again, on the windows of the palace. “Is it certain that the prisoner is to die?”

The officer smiled at the simplicity of the question, but with the apathy of one too much familiarized with human suffering, to admit of compassion.

“Do any doubt it?” he rejoined. “It is the lot of man, reverend monk; and more especially is it the lot of those on whom the judgment of St. Mark has alighted. It were better that your penitent looked to his soul.”

“Surely thou hast thy private and express commands! They have named a minute, when this bloody work is to be performed?”

“Holy Carmelite, I have. The time will not be weary, and you will do well to make the most of it, unless you have faith, already, in the prisoner’s condition.”

As he spoke, the officer threw a glance at the dial of the square, and walked coolly away. The action left the priest and the prisoner again alone, between the columns. It was evident that the former could not yet believe in the reality of the execution.

“Hast thou no hope, Jacopo?” he asked.

“Carmelite, in my God.”

“They cannot commit this wrong! I shived Antonio—I witnessed his fate, and the prince knows it!”

“What is a prince and his justice, where the self-

ishness of a few rules! Father, thou art new in the senate's service."

"I shall not presume to say that God will blast those who do this deed, for we cannot trace the mysteries of his wisdom. This life, and all this world can offer, are but specks in his omniscient eye, and what to us seems evil, may be pregnant with good.—Hast thou faith in thy Redeemer, Jacopo?"

The prisoner laid his hand upon his heart, and smiled, with the calm assurance that none but those who are thus sustained can feel.

"We will again pray, my son."

The Carmelite and Jacopo kneeled, side by side, the latter bowing his head to the block, while the monk uttered a final appeal to the mercy of the Deity. The former arose, but the latter continued in the suppliant attitude. The monk was so full of holy thoughts, that, forgetting his former wishes, he was nearly content the prisoner should pass into the fruition of that hope which elevated his own mind. The officer and executioner drew near, the former touching the arm of Father Anselmo, and pointing towards the distant dial.

"The moment is near;" he whispered, more from habit, than in any tenderness to the prisoner.

The Carmelite turned instinctively towards the palace, forgetting, in the sudden impulse, all but his sense of earthly justice. There were forms at the windows, and he fancied a signal, to stay the impending blow, was about to be given."

"Hold!" he exclaimed. "For the love of Maria of most pure memory, be not too hasty!"

The exclamation was repeated by a shrill female voice, and then Gelsomina, eluding every effort to arrest her, rushed through the Dalmatians, and reached the group between the granite columns.

Wonder and curiosity agitated the multitude, and a deep murmur ran through the square.

“ ‘Tis a maniac !” cried one.

“ ‘Tis a victim of his arts !” said another, for when men have a reputation for any particular vice, the world seldom fails to attribute all the rest.

Gelsomina seized the bonds of Jacopo, and endeavored, frantically, to release his arms.

“ I had hoped thou would’st have been spared this sight, poor Gessina !” said the condemned.

“ Be not alarmed !” she answered, gasping for breath. “ They do it in mockery—’tis one of their wiles to mislead—but they cannot—no, they dare not harm a hair of thy head, Carlo !”

“ Dearest Gelsomina !”

“ Nay, do not hold me.—I will speak to the citizens, and tell them all. They are angry now, but when they know the truth they will love thee, Carlo, as I do.”

“ Bless thee—bless thee !—I would thou hadst not come !”

“ Fear not for me ! I am little used to such a crowd, but thou wilt see that I shall dare to speak them fair, and to make known the truth boldly. I want but breath.”

“ Dearest ! Thou hast a mother—a father to share thy tenderness. Duty to them will make thee happy !”

“ Now, I can speak, and thou shalt see how I will vindicate thy name.”

She arose from the arms of her lover, who, notwithstanding his bonds, released his hold of her slight form with a reluctance greater than that with which he parted with life. The struggle in the mind of Jacopo seemed over. He bowed his head, passively, to the block, before which he was kneeling, and it is probable, by the manner in which his hands were clasped, that he prayed for her who

left him. Not so Gelsomina. Parting her hair, over her spotless forehead, with both hands, she advanced towards the fishermen, who were familiar to her eye, by their red caps and bare limbs. Her smile was like that which the imagination would bestow on the blessed, in their intercourse of love.

“Venetians!” she said, “I cannot blame you; ye are here to witness the death of one whom ye believe unfit to live—”

“The murderer of old Antonio!” muttered several of the group.

“Ay, even the murderer of that aged and excellent man. But, when you hear the truth, when you come to know that he, whom you have believed an assassin, was a pious child, a faithful servant of the republic, a gentle gondolier, and a true heart, you will change your bloody purpose, for a wish for justice.”

A common murmur drowned her voice, which was so trembling and low, as to need deep stillness to render the words audible. The Carmelite had advanced to her side, and he motioned earnestly for silence.

“Hear her, men of the Lagunes!” he said; “she utters holy truth.”

“This reverend and pious monk, with Heaven, is my witness. When you shall know Carlo better, and have heard his tale, ye will be the first to cry out for his release. I tell you this, that when the doge shall appear at yon window and make the signal of mercy, you need not be angry, and believe that your class has been wronged. Poor Carlo—”

“The girl raves!” interrupted the moody fishermen. “Here is no Carlo, but Jacopo Frontoni, a common bravo.”

Gelsomina smiled, in the security of the innocent, and, regaining her breath, which nervous agitation still disturbed, she resumed.

"Carlo, or Jacopo—Jacopo, or Carlo—it matters little."

"Ha! There is a sign from the palace!" shouted the Carmelite, stretching both his arms in that direction, as if to grasp a boon. The clarions sounded, and another wave stirred the multitude. Gelsomina uttered a cry of delight, and turned to throw herself upon the bosom of the reprieved. The ax glittered before her eyes, and the head of Jacopo rolled upon the stones, as if to meet her. A general movement in the living mass denoted the end.

The Dalmatians wheeled into column, the Sbirri pushed aside the throng, on their way to their haunts, the water of the bay was dashed upon the flags, the clotted saw-dust was gathered, the head and trunk, block, basket, ax, and executioner, disappeared, and the crowd circulated around the fatal spot.

During this horrible and brief moment, neither Father Anselmo nor Gelsomina moved. All was over, and still the entire scene appeared to be delusion.

"Take away this maniac!" said an officer of the police, pointing to Gelsomina as he spoke.

He was obeyed with Venetian readiness, but his words proved prophetic, before his servitors had quitted the square. The Carmelite scarce breathed. He gazed at the moving multitude, at the windows of the palace, and at the sun which shone so gloriously in the heavens.

"Thou art lost in this crowd!" whispered one at his elbow. "Reverend Carmelite, you will do well to follow me."

The monk was too much subdued to hesitate. His conductor led him, by many secret ways, to a quay, where he instantly embarked, in a gondola, for the main. Before the sun reached the meridian, the thoughtful and trembling monk was on his journey

towards the states of the Church: and ere long he became established in the castle of Sant' Agata.

At the usual hour the sun fell behind the mountains of the Tyrol, and the moon reappeared above the Lido. The narrow streets of Venice, again, poured out their thousands upon the squares. The mild light fell athwart the quaint architecture, and the giddy tower, throwing a deceptive glory on the city of islands.

The porticoes became brilliant with lamps, the gay laughed, the reckless trifled, the masker pursued his hidden purpose, the cantatrice and the grotesque acted their parts, and the million existed in that vacant enjoyment which distinguishes the pleasures of the thoughtless and the idle. Each lived for himself, while the state of Venice held its vicious sway, corrupting alike the ruler and the ruled, by its mockery of those sacred principles which are alone founded in truth and natural justice.

THE END.





